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### The Relationship of Preservice Teachers to English Language Learners in Mainstream Classrooms

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THE RELATIONSHIP OF PRESERVICE TEACHERS TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
LEARNERS IN MAINSTREAM CLASSROOMS

By

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A DISSERTATION

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Lincoln, Nebraska

May, 2013

## THE RELATIONSHIP OF PRESERVICE TEACHERS TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN MAINSTREAM CLASSROOMS

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University of Nebraska, 2013

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship of preservice teachers by examining their attitudes and perceptions to English Language Learners in the mainstream classroom. An ever-increasing population of ELLs in U.S. classrooms has challenged the preparation of preservice teachers to meet the specific needs of this group of students. Preservice teachers' attitudes toward their ability to connect with ELLs, their self-efficacy toward preparation to teach ELLs, and their attitudes toward language use in the classroom were probed. The research design included both quantitative and qualitative inquiries. A survey was administered to preservice teachers in three teacher preparation institutions to measure preservice teachers' attitudes and perceptions of ELL inclusion, followed by a qualitative inquiry of five teacher interviews examining their experiences with ELLs in more detail.

Results showed preservice teachers viewed ELL inclusion in a positive light and believed that ELLs were better served in the mainstream classroom. Preservice teachers were willing to work with other professionals to support ELLs through accommodations made to regular classroom assignments.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

In the fall of the school year, a second grade classroom composed of a combination of minority and majority students at Urban Elementary eagerly listened while their teacher read from a large picture book. As the story ended the teacher explained the next activity, giving directions in multiple steps and a final reminder of classroom behaviors for independent seatwork. Quickly, the teacher gathered the first reading group around the table in the back of the room. Students began to busy themselves except for Estelle, who furtively glanced from student to student as if for clues to follow. Eventually, Estelle put her head down on her desk and burst into tears. Those around her, concerned for her well-being, signaled the teacher. The teacher responded crisply that the little girl would be fine, that in time she would learn the routines, and would eventually “get it.” The teacher proceeded on with the reading group leaving the little girl alone with her tears at her desk.

The teacher may have believed that she was doing what was in the best interest of the student to hasten her adjustment to the new culture of the classroom, but it illustrates the problem faced by many mainstream teachers in today’s increasingly diverse classrooms. A lack of knowledge about how language is acquired and few substantive teaching strategies geared toward English Language Learners (ELLs) leaves many content teachers unsure and ill-prepared to work effectively with this population. Estella eventually calmed herself and began to mimic those around her and following the outward appearance of being busy at her desk. But the question the education community must struggle with remains: where does the responsibility for learning fall?

Is it the responsibility of the student or is the teacher accountable for making sure learning happens? With changing dynamics in the classroom and increased accountability for teachers, can teachers truly accommodate *all* populations of students?

### **Statement of Problem**

The United States is fast becoming a culturally and linguistically diverse nation with a diversification trend that is reflected most rapidly within the nation's young and school aged children population (Garcia, 1993). California illustrates this trend of a growing ethnic majority in public schools. Of the total population of 6.2 million students, 50.4% are identified as Hispanic and Latino, 27% are White, 9% are Asian, 7% are Black, and 7% are Filipino, Pacific Islander, Native American and other ethnic groups. Students with limited English proficiency make number 1.5 million students. This trend can be observed in almost every state in the union (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009).

Nationwide, the percentage of schools where White students accounted for more than 50 percent of enrollment has also continued to reduce in size. White, non-Hispanic student enrollment has decreased from 64.5% of the total student population in 1995 to 57.1% in 2005. In the same period of time, the U.S. student population increased from 44 million students to 48 million students (pre-kindergarten to Grade 12), while (a) minority enrollment as a proportion of the total enrollment in elementary and secondary education rose from 35.1% in 1995 to 42.9% in 2005; (b) Hispanic enrollment, as a proportion of the total enrollment, increased from 13.5% in 1995 to 19.2% in 2005; (c) the number of African-American students increased from 16.8 % to 17.2% in the same time span; (d) The Asian/Pacific Islander population rose from 3.7% to 4.7%; and (e) the

American Indian/Alaska Native student population also increased by a lesser amount from 1.1% to 1.2% from 1995 to 2005 (National Center For Educational Statistics, 2005).

With the demographic transformation of the school population, the “emerging majority” ethnic and racial background students, continue to be placed “at risk” in today’s schools (Garcia,1993). Solutions for improving schools and student achievement are critical issues debated at all levels of education from K-12 school systems to teacher preparation programs (Warren, 2002; Haberman, 1995, 1999, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2002). As more and more classrooms are faced with the issues of poverty and diversity, effective curricular and pedagogical choices for all student populations have come to the forefront of educational reform discussion (Nieto, 2000; Haberman, 1999; Banks, 2001; Paley, 2002; Dalton, 1998).

### **Educational Challenges of the Growing ELL Populations**

An ever-increasing challenge to this issue is the growing population of English Language Learners. In the 2003-2004 school year, English Language Learner (ELL) services were provided to 3.8 million students (11% of all the students). California and Texas had the largest reported number of students receiving ELL services. In California, there were 1.5 million students (26 percent of all students who received ELL services, and in Texas, there were 0.7 million students (16 percent of all students) who received ELL services (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2009).

Presently about 56% of all public school teachers in the United States have at least one ELL student in their class, but less than 20% of the teachers who serve ELLs are certified English as a second language (ESL) or bilingual teachers. Nearly half of teachers assigned to teach ELLs have not received any preparation in ELL methods

designed for linguistically and culturally diverse populations (Waxman, Tellez, & Walberg, 2004). The disproportionate growth of ELLs without qualified teachers may mean that schools will be unable to meet the academic and language needs of ELLs (Warren, 2002, Tharp, 2004; Nieto, 2000; Tasan, 2001).

Increasingly, teachers report they are inadequately prepared to handle the growing needs of this new population (Tasan, 2001; Bruning, Schraw, Norby & Ronning, 2004; Pajares, 2003; Warren, 2002; Haberman, 1995; Haberman & Post, 1998). This lack of preparation can affect the quality of instruction. Teacher quality is generally defined as the educational level reached by teachers as well as teacher scores on exit exams of content knowledge (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999). Data from this report indicates that teacher quality is responsible for 40 percent of students' academic achievement. Only 20% of teachers felt prepared to teach students with limited English. In light of the fact that teacher quality is defined in terms of content knowledge and teachers themselves report they are less than adequately prepared, it stands to reason that teacher preparation is a strong factor in whether or not ELLs are successful in the classroom.

### **Teacher Confidence and Classroom Cultural Changes**

Teachers in mainstream classrooms are more and more being faced with issues of poverty and diversity, bringing to the forefront the discussion of curricular and pedagogical strategies (Nieto, 2000). Lee and Smith (1996) found that teachers reported a sense of powerlessness when facing the new culture shifts in their classrooms. The increase in the diversity of the students in the classroom and the confusion caused by placement choices can undermine teacher confidence. Because of their lack of English language skills, ELLs are often viewed as deficient and can consequently be misplaced in

lower-track programs (Oakes, 1985; Nieto, 2000; Warren, 2002). Research (Oakes, 1995; Ashton, Webb & Doda, 1983) has shown that as a result of these factors teachers in these classrooms may experience lowered self-efficacy resulting in lowered expectations for their students (Raudenbush, Rowan, & Fai Cheong, 1992; Bruning, Schraw, Norby & Ronning, 2004; Kagan, 1992).

Shifts in the ethnic cultural makeup of the classroom can influence teacher confidence in their ability to teach to all populations. Tasan (2001) surveyed 234 elementary teachers with classrooms populated with students who did not have a command of the Standard English utilized in schools and found that these teachers had lower self-efficacy than their colleagues in higher track classrooms with students who did speak English. As teacher self-efficacy declines, students learn less (August & Hakuta, 1997; Cummins, 2000; Diaz-Rico, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2006). Clearly a disconnect exists between teacher preparedness, ongoing professional development, and the needs of the ELL student population.

### **Teacher Assumptions and Beliefs**

Research indicates that assumptions and beliefs teachers hold about their students impacts the level of student achievement (Bandura, 2001; Howard, 2006; Tasan, 2001; Templin, Guile, & Okuma, 2001; Warren, 2002). Teachers' knowledge about the social, cultural, and language backgrounds of their students and knowledge of how language is acquired influences planning, pedagogical choices, and instruction and can result in the increase in academic achievement of students (Au, 1980; Lee, 1995; Bandura, 2001; Garcia, 1993).

Little research exists on mainstream teachers' efficacy to teach ELL populations. Research can be found dealing with regular classroom teachers' efficacy and the effect on



the general student population (Bandura, 1989, 2001; Brophy & Good, 1986; Connor, Morrison, & Katch, 2004), but fewer articles deal specifically with mainstream teachers' efficacy and its influence on ELLs' self-efficacy and performance. More specifically, there is no research on the preservice teachers' preparedness and their efficacy self-perception to teach ELLs in the mainstream classroom.

It is important for the educational community as a whole to understand how to effectively teach the ELL population. As this population continues to grow, and as educational reform demands accountability of all student populations, teachers as a whole will be required to be knowledgeable about effective curriculum and pedagogy for ELLs. Of special concern are the new teachers who are entering the workforce. As the current teaching workforce begins to turn over and new teachers come out of teacher education institutions, the need for adequately prepared teachers who understand the needs of the ELL population and have an arsenal of teaching strategies geared for this population will become extremely important.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore how preservice teachers perceive their roles with ELLs in mainstream classrooms during their preservice teacher education preparation up until completion of a student teaching semester. Principals, superintendents, and school boards are required by law to increase proficiency levels of all populations, so increased pressure has been placed on teachers to have all of their students score well on standardized tests. More attention will therefore be focused on the best methods and policies to help ELLs attain academic success (Neito, 2000; Tasan, 2001). If major factors in student performance are impacted by teacher expectations and

the way they communicate that to their students, then an in-depth study of preservice teacher perceptions about this connection is appropriate and timely (Creswell, 1994, 1998, 2003; Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore how preservice teachers perceive their roles with ELLs in mainstream classrooms during their preservice teacher education preparation including their student teaching semester.

### **Definition of Terms**

Preservice Teachers in this study are teachers in their last two years of coursework preparation in a teacher education program.

Connecting Teachers in this study are teachers whose beliefs as motivating and sustaining forces in multicultural and ELL education.

### **The Research Questions**

What is the essence of the self-perceived relationship of the elementary preservice teachers to English Learners in the mainstream classroom?

The following are more specific sub-questions relating to the central research question.

- What are preservice teachers' perceptions of their ability to connect with ELLs in the mainstream classroom?
- How do preservice teachers perceive their self-efficacy for teaching ELLs and ability to connect with ELLs relates to ELL achievement?
- How do preservice teachers perceive their teacher education preparation program prepared them to effectively address issues of diversity, both cultural and linguistic, in the mainstream classroom?

- What are preservice teachers' attitudes toward the use of native language in the classroom?

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

A need exists to explore and describe the phenomenon of the belief systems of educators as they interact with students from diverse populations, and how these beliefs can affect classroom culture and the school at large. The literature pertaining to teacher efficacy is considerable and predicts *student motivational orientation* (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001), *student performance* (Aronson & Steele, 2005; Banks, 2001; Shade, Kelly, & Oberg, 1997), and *student achievement* (Haberman, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Research pertaining to the perceptions of teachers regarding English Language Learners in mainstream classrooms is not nearly as extensive. The literature on preservice teachers and their self-perceptions and beliefs about ELLs is minimal.

Three factors complicate the issue of the self-perception of teachers working effectively with ELLs and the preparation of preservice teachers in this area. First, the ELL population growth is accelerating in classrooms (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2009; Reeves, 2006). Additionally, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002) has heightened the accountability of teachers for not only the learning of the general student population but the ELL population as well (Educational Research Service, 1995; Waxman, Tellez, & Walberg, 2004). Finally, it can not be assumed that classroom teachers are trained and prepared to teach this select population of learners (Au, 1980; Brophy and Good, 1986; Garcia-Nevarez, Stafford, & Arias, 2005; Gatbonton, 1999; Haberman & Post, 1998; Reeves, 2004, 2006).

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2002) the demographics of the population of foreign-born people indicated that 60% came from Europe, 19% from Latin America, 9% from Asia, and 10% from other countries. By 2000 only 15% of the foreign-born population was from European countries, with an over 50% increase coming from Latin America and Mexico, and 25% from China, the Philippines, India, Vietnam, and Korea. By 2004, 9.9 million school-age children (ages 5-17) spoke a language other than English at home representing - 19% of all children. Because the statistics show that the numbers of ELLs in regular mainstream classrooms are rapidly increasing, the lack of attention focused on the professional development of mainstream teachers to work specifically with this population of students is cause for concern.

The current driving force in education is standards-based reform, requiring that teaching be central to the improvement of student achievement. In 2002, federal No Child Left Behind legislation mandated that schools provide a quality education for *all* students. It brought the education of ELLs into even greater focus by mandating that all states test their ELLs annually and hold schools accountable for the educational progress of these students. The stakes are higher than they have ever been for bringing ELLs into the academic mainstream classroom. If teachers are inadequately prepared to meet the needs of ELLs, then it would be important to look at how preservice teachers could come into the work force already prepared to teach ELLs.

The research indicates that 90% of U.S. public school teachers are white; most grew up and attended school in middle class, English-speaking, predominantly white communities and received their teacher preparation in predominantly white colleges and universities (Gay, Dingus, & Jackson, 2003). As a result, many white educators simply

have not acquired the experiential and education background that would in part prepare them for the growing diversity of their students (Ladson-Billings, 2002; Vavrus, 2002).

Teacher preparation, then, seems to be a key area to spotlight as means of affecting the academic performance of ELLs. Research shows that teacher efficacy can directly affect the performance of the general student population, so it should follow that the same is true for teachers and diverse populations specifically ELLs.

This review of the literature will begin by discussing student efficacy and its effect on achievement and performance, teacher self-efficacy as it effects student self-efficacy, student performance, and achievement in general. I have included information that applies to teachers' expectations and the effect of their perceptions on ELL achievement levels. The discussion will continue with the characteristics of effective ELL teachers and their experiences and attitudes toward ELL learners and narrows to how preservice and novice teachers are prepared in general for effective teaching of ELLs.

### **Definition of Efficacy**

Bandura (1989,1997) defines self-efficacy as a judgment of one's ability to perform a task within a specific domain. Self-efficacy plays a major role in how students approach goals, tasks, and challenges. Academic self-efficacy is the conviction about one's ability to perform a given academic task at a designated level. It affects thinking processes and can enhance or impair the level of cognitive functioning (Bong, 1999). High self-efficacy leads to increased performance and improved performance, in turn, increases a person's self-efficacy (Bruning, Schraw, Norby & Ronning, 2004). As one gains more knowledge and expertise in the process needed for a given task, one begins to

make more accurate assessments of task demands and characteristics, which, in turn, leads to clearer distinctions between one's subjective competences (Bong, 1999).

Teachers and schools are responsible for developing student competence and confidence as they progress through school (Pajares, 2003). According to Bandura (1986), "Educational practices should be gauged not only by the skills and knowledge they impart for present use, but also by what they do to children's beliefs about their capabilities, which affects how they approach the future. Students who develop a strong sense of self-efficacy are well equipped to educate themselves when they have to rely on their own initiative" (Bandura, 1986, p. 147).

Students develop their self-efficacy perceptions by interpreting information from various sources: 1) mastery experiences with content, 2) vicarious experiences, 3) verbal messages and social persuasions from others, and 4) physiological states such as anxiety and stress (Connor, Morrison, & Katch, 2004; Pajares, 1996; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). As children strive to exercise control over their surroundings, their first transactions are mediated by adults who can either empower them with self-assurance or diminish their fledgling self-beliefs. Infusing multicultural elements into teacher preparation programs, professional development, and educational policy setting may help produce gains for all student populations including those with diverse backgrounds.

### **Student Efficacy, Achievement Performance, and School Success**

A key factor in human behavior and motivation is the belief people have about their capabilities (Bandura, 1997). According to Graham and Weiner (1996) current

research and interest on the influence of self-beliefs in school contexts is so prevalent that inquiry into student self efficacy is on the verge of dominating the field of motivation.

The impact of a student's self-efficacy on his or her academic performance and school success is significant. The beliefs students create, develop, and perceive about themselves are vital forces in their success or failure in school (Pajares, 2003). Self-efficacy indirectly affects future learning by influencing students' choices to engage in more challenging tasks and to persist despite failure (Mikulecky, Lloyd, & Huang, 1996; O'Brien, Martinez-Pons, & Kopala, 1999; Pajares, 2003).

Individuals possess beliefs about themselves that influence their control over their thoughts, feelings, and actions (Pajares, 2003). Students who perceive they have control over their skills and resources have higher self efficacy and were more apt to feel greater control and persist longer. If a student has high self efficacy, he may: (a) control his thoughts and experience less stress and anxiety about the task, (b) believe he can cope and be less likely to engage in avoidance of the task, and (c) set better goals to reach higher task performance (Bandura, 1989; Bong & Skaalvik, 2003; Pajares, 1996). There is substantial evidence in the research to support the connection of student confidence to initiating and sustaining motivation and academic behaviors (e.g. Bandura, 1989; Pajares, 1996; Pintrich and DeGroot, 1990; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992).

Compared with the great number of studies investigating self efficacy and performance in specific areas, research on self efficacy perceptions in diverse academic populations has been scarce (Bong, 1997, 1999; Bong & Skaalvik, 2003). Stevens (2004) found that little research exists on the personal qualities that affect achievement within specific minority groups. Two areas of concern related to diversity and self



efficacy are (a) cultural and ethnic differences in students regarding motivational beliefs and achievement, and (b) the teacher's self efficacy as it affects classroom climate and, ultimately, student performance especially when the teacher is not a member of the same cultural or ethnic group of the students in the classroom. This reciprocal connection between the student's self efficacy and the teacher's self efficacy is a dynamic relationship in any classroom but the added complexity of student diversity needs to be studied further.

Bong (1999) analyzed the factors and contexts that help or impede students' academic self-efficacy generalizations in order to devise instructional strategies aiming at producing confident as well as competent learners. She looked specifically for differences in the academic self efficacy perceptions in students of Hispanic origin compared with their non-Hispanic peers. Bong surveyed 383 students (16% White, 6% African American, 55% Hispanic, 21% Asian American, and 2% Native American and other) from four Los Angeles high schools about the role of personal factors such as gender, ethnicity, and expertise in determining the generality of academic self-efficacy judgments across subject areas. Students reported their confidence for solving representative problems in six school subjects: English, Spanish, U.S. History, algebra, geometry, and chemistry. Hispanic students distinguished their competency in Spanish from their perceived capability to function in other domains. Non-Hispanic students generalized their academic self-efficacy across all subject domains with no differences, seeing them as similar tasks.

Mikulecky, Lloyd, and Huang (1995) surveyed 73 adult learners in an intermediate level reading class about their judgments of their capabilities in literacy and

learning. The researchers selected five elements of self efficacy – ability, persistence, locus of control, aspiration, and general value of the activity – to determine the effect on adult learners’ self efficacy in relation to literacy and English language learning. They concluded that students’ self-perception about the tasks and the sense of their own abilities were related to their likelihood of their ability to persist in the face of difficulty. Self-perception of their abilities had a strong influence on the probability of persistence and academic performance.

O’Brien, Martinez-Pons, and Kopala (1999) examined how minority groups’ self-efficacy influenced future choices and performances. They also analyzed how minority groups used ethnic identity to further negotiate their efforts to improve mathematics self-efficacy. The researchers studied 415 students in 11<sup>th</sup> grade: 165 white students, 124 Hispanic, 95 Black, and 31 Asian students, finding that self-efficacy is predicted by academic performance, tasks such as performing everyday math tasks, completing mathematics-related school courses, and solving mathematics academic problems. The researchers also found that for minority groups, improved ethnic identity, a clear understanding of one’s ethnicity and valuing of one’s ethnic identity, improves efforts of self-assessment of mathematics skills.

Student achievement and success in school is influenced by the student’s self efficacy beliefs and will impact motivation and persistence. If student self efficacy is malleable, then teachers can have a powerful influence on student beliefs about how well they can perform a task in the classroom. Teacher beliefs about student achievement can guide students to a higher performance in the classroom.

### **Teacher Efficacy and Its Influence on Student Achievement**

The teacher's perception of his or her capacity to promote learning (teacher self-efficacy) is a critical component of student motivation (Bandura, 1989, 2001; Bong, 1997, 1999; Bruning, Schraw, Norby, & Ronning, 2004). Self-efficacy in teachers manifests itself in the beliefs and expectations of their own teaching impact and can affect students' achievement in significant ways (Howard, 2006). Efficacious teachers tend to persist with students, believing that the students can achieve given enough differentiation of instructional strategies and teacher input.

Teachers function out of a personal belief system that is tacit and often supported by unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms, and academic material to be taught. Kagan (1992) summarized research on teacher belief and reported that self-efficacious teachers were more likely to: (a) use praise rather than criticism, (b) persist with low-achieving students and be more accepting of them, (c) experiment with new curriculum and materials, and (d) change instructional strategies directly impacting student achievement resulting in higher student efficacy. Conversely, as teachers' feelings of efficacy declined, students learn less (Tasan, 2001). Tasan defined teacher self-efficacy as a measurement of the beliefs of effectiveness without regard to the student's language or cultural background. Tasan surveyed 234 teachers using a Teacher Efficacy Scale (Tasan, 2001) and found that teachers' feelings of self-efficacy were highest with standard English-speaking students, establishing a clear connection between student language background and teacher efficacy. He also found that teacher efficacy is fluid and dynamic and can be influenced through teacher preparation and professional training. Lack of preparation, both in methodologies or in subject matter content, can be

reflected in lower feelings of self-efficacy in teachers and may subsequently be communicated to students further influencing students' feelings of self-efficacy for classroom tasks.

Teacher behavior and instructional choices can make a difference on student achievement. Brophy and Good (1986) focused on individual teachers and their application of differentiated techniques to enhance student achievement. Brophy (1983) administered the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT) over three consecutive years to students taught by 88 second grade teachers and 77 third grade teachers. All were experienced teachers. Outcome data revealed that teachers who produced the most growth in student achievement took personal responsibility for students' learning by organizing classroom setups that promoted learning and by proactively selecting instructional strategies that were based on student needs on a daily basis. They displayed a "can do" attitude toward overcoming problems in the classroom. Interviews with teachers revealed feelings of efficacy and "rather than give up and make excuses for failure, these teachers would redouble their efforts, providing slower students with extra attention and more individualized instruction" (Brophy, 1983, p. 341). Persistent behaviors were especially noticeable in effective teachers of low socioeconomic status (SES) students, emphasizing productive engagement in academic activities.

### **Teacher Expectations and ELL Efficacy and Achievement**

If teacher efficacy beliefs impact student efficacy beliefs and subsequently student self-efficacy influences student achievement, then exploring the specific teacher behaviors and expectations that determine student behaviors in general must be studied with special attention given to specific at-risk populations. Because of the addition of

language and diversity issues alongside academic content tasks, it is necessary to look at the unique factors that influence ELLs' self-efficacy.

Ladson-Billings (2002) defines culturally competent teachers as those who know who they are, know their students well, and allow space for the students' authentic, cultural knowledge to inform and enhance their teaching. Teachers with high self-efficacy believe that they can cause significant change in their students' achievement and will consequently value student input and control. Shade, Kelly, and Oberg (1997) proposed seven principles for building connections: (a) affirming students' cultural connections, (b) being personally inviting, (c) creating physically welcoming classroom spaces, (d) reinforcing students' academic development, (e) accommodating instruction to the cultural and learning styles of the students, (f) managing classrooms with firm, consistent, and loving control, and (g) creating opportunities for both individual and cooperative work.

**Factors related to ELL's self-efficacy.** As the issue of how teachers' beliefs and behaviors are related to the performance of ELLs in the classroom has been studied, a direct link between diversity and teacher efficacy can be implied. What teachers believe about the learning abilities of their ELL students may be reflected in the type of instructional choices they choose to boost their performance. Higher expectations by the teacher for the student influences ELL performance in the classroom. Stevens (2004) identified three overall factors related to ELL self-efficacy including: (a) teachers' personal beliefs, (b) students' performance factors, and (c) student choices. When educators encourage the development of these personal constructs in students, achievement improves. Stevens (2004) found that when teachers strengthened student

confidence in the ability to use their skills and mathematic knowledge, achievement of both Hispanic and Caucasian 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students improved and they were able to successfully complete specific mathematics tasks. Given self-efficacy tests, motivational scales, and mathematics performance on twenty problems covering general math ability, the students showed that their beliefs and motivations played an important role in future mathematics achievement. As noted above, mastery experiences lead to increased self-efficacy. Because the Hispanic students in the study had experienced fewer mastery experiences in mathematics prior to the study's assessments, they reported significantly less confidence in their ability to use their skills and knowledge effectively to successfully complete mathematics problems than Caucasian students did. Hispanic students who received a lower grade on a particular mathematics task than expected were more likely to use the information to adjust their assessment of efficacy negatively, since they had little additional information to contradict it.

Stevens (2004) determined that students need opportunities to build confidence and protect their self-efficacy. Messages sent by parents and teachers, such as career opportunities available to students, in turn helps them adjust their feelings of efficacy. Stevens maintained that when subtle but pervasive verbal persuasions were given to student and when role-models were available in the environment, the student performed at a higher level. He concluded that Caucasian students received greater amounts of information that positively influenced self-efficacy than did the diverse populations. When educators directly encouraged the development of positive self-efficacy and motivation for mathematics, performance and achievement increased for all groups.

Templin, Guile, and Okuma (2001) hypothesized that ELLs' performance can be raised through specific teaching and curriculum aimed at addressing self-efficacy issues. They studied 293 college freshmen enrolled in English I, focusing on whether or not self-efficacy and achievement could be increased as a result of specific training procedures. Training included helping students set higher goals and giving instruction on how to accomplish a task or a group of tasks. As students set more challenging goals for themselves, their performance on the tasks was enhanced. The researchers ascertained that a combination of academic tasks with specific instruction in goals and objective-setting increased ELL students' self-efficacy and English performance. Students with higher self-efficacy set more challenging goals for themselves than students with low self-efficacy leading to enhanced performance. Students' self efficacy and English test scores showed a statistically significant gain at the end of the semester.

Students who report higher self-efficacy also report higher intrinsic motivation, and because of this confidence in their ability and the use of their knowledge to solve problems, they seek even more challenging tasks (Stevens, 2004). Students with higher self-efficacy seek out higher-level courses while students with lower self-efficacy may enroll in a higher-level course only at the pressure from parents or because of requirements from educators. The role of the teacher in creating an environment that promotes verbal persuasion and modeling in students should be examined in light of the change that they create in the self-efficacy factors of students.

Bong (1999) studied 383 students from four Los Angeles high schools and found a similar outcome in adolescent ELLs. Students with Hispanic origin proved to make a clearer distinction between their perceived competence in Spanish and

competence in other subjects. Bong called this generality of efficacy perceptions.

Hispanic students distinguished their personal perceptions of their Spanish ability from other academic domains. Other factors beyond self-perception helped or impeded their academic self-efficacy. Bong concluded that teachers need to devise effective instructional strategies aimed at producing confident and competent learners.

**Teacher expectations of ELL students' performance.** Not only does the student's own self-efficacy effect performance and achievement, but the teacher and the classroom environment plays an important role in what students perceive about their abilities to attempt the tasks presented to them. A link between teacher self-efficacy and the resulting change in student efficacy could play a critical role in the achievement of second language learners.

Teachers of ELL populations have expectations for their students that may be altered by their beliefs about whether or not they are adequately prepared to teach them. Tasan (2001) found that as teacher efficacy declines, students learned less. She surveyed 234 teachers and found that, because teachers did not feel adequately prepared to teach in classrooms with issues of poverty and diversity, they reflected this in a lower self-efficacy rating of their ability to work with ELLs. Tasan also found that teachers, who had lowered aspirations for themselves, consequently lowered their expectations for ELL students. Teachers' self-efficacy beliefs were highest when working with standard English-speaking students, putting the ELL students at a distinct disadvantage. Tasan also examined whether or not teachers' feelings of efficacy differed according to their own ethnic identities and found that there was no difference in teacher efficacy based on teacher ethnicity. Diverse teachers faced the same frustrations and feelings of



powerlessness and felt inadequately trained to handle the problems that accompany the teaching of lower socioeconomic groups and ELLs. This feeling of inadequacy lowered teacher self-efficacy and the assessment of their resources to work with ELLs.

Teachers in lower-track programs with non-English speaking students may have lower self-efficacy than teachers in higher track programs. Raudenbush, Rowan, and Fai Cheong (1992) found that teachers of lower-track programs and classes populated with students who do not have a command of Standard English had lower self-efficacy than their colleagues in higher-track classes with students who did speak Standard English. Because language seemed to be a criterion in many cases for placement in lower-track programs, lower-track classrooms contained many more nonstandard English and non-English speaking students (Nieto, 2000).

While studying four ELL students and their self-efficacy in depth, Huang and Chang (2002) investigated ELLs in an intensive language classroom. The students and the teacher were interviewed to determine their levels of confidence in English reading and writing and to find out their perceived feelings about learning. The research found that the participants' self-efficacy levels did not correlate with their learning achievements. Factors such as ambitiousness in class discussions, persistence in writing revisions, and interest in class activities were more powerfully related to their self-efficacy beliefs than participants' achievement levels.

A telling finding was the part the teacher played in influencing the participants' self-efficacy and consequently the ELLs' achievement. The teacher's impression of each student and his resulting support for that student directly affected the student's performance. Students reported that because of the teacher's positive impressions of

them, they increased their efforts in class, increased class participation; this perception of support might indirectly have influenced achievement.

Efficacy beliefs for teachers are also related to their instructional practices and the academic progress of their students (Bruning, Schraw, Norby & Ronning, 2004; Pajares, 2003). Warren (2002) interviewed twenty-nine public elementary school teachers from four schools in significantly low SES areas and four schools in higher SES areas and compared the teachers' self-efficacy ratings. Teachers who worked with students in low SES schools perceived their ELL students to have low achievement, a lack of skills, problems attributed to factors outside of school such as differences in social class, deficient backgrounds, a first language other than English, and ethnicity. The teachers perceived the students' families and cultures to be a deficit and did not value any special talents of culturally diverse families. When asked about what they expected of their students, teachers stated that they did not expect them to graduate from high school basing that prediction on what they believed that "they cannot and will not learn" (Warren, 2002, p. 113). The teachers of lower SES students did not perceive that it was their responsibility to overcome the deficits in students' prior knowledge and experiences; they lacked determination to work with these students. They were unwilling and unable or incapable of resolving the problems these students faced. The teachers in low SES schools exhibited less teacher effort lowered teaching standards, and a tendency to water down curriculum than teachers in higher SES schools. They believed there was little a teacher could do and that the problem. It was not a school deficit but more a cultural and family problem. Further, they did not have confidence in the public school as an effective tool to help these children.

In the same study, teachers in high SES schools had dramatically different responses. They viewed their students as capable of high academic achievement and their students' parents as resources and contributing partners. Teachers went out of their way to try to understand the communities they worked in. They had high expectations of students believing that all students could learn. They expressed the idea that teachers have a dramatic affect on students' learning, and they as teachers were "called to teach" (Warren, 2002, p. 113). They believed that the hard work of a teacher could make a difference in students' achievement. Finally, they believed the school could and does make a difference in the students' lives.

Both sets of teachers believed their own birth children were capable of high academic achievement. The low SES teachers had higher expectations of their birth children as compared to their students and expressed the desire for their children to attend college. They felt the teachers of their own children were making a difference. They expected rigorous academic programs from their children's schools. This was in direct contrast to the expectations the teachers had for their low SES students.

This comparison of the two types of teachers provides a striking example of how teachers' beliefs are related to efficacy in their students and consequently the performance of the students. Expectations from more rigorous academic programs and the teachers' feelings that they were making a difference in their students' lives correlated to a rise in the self-perception of academic performance in students.

The performance level of the students is further impacted by any negative attitudes teachers hold about their students' diversity and language (Reeves, 2004, 2006). Reeves found that teachers' lack of confidence and experience working with ELLs fueled

their feelings of inadequacy and even resentment. Reeves surveyed 297 subject area teachers from four high schools about their attitudes and perceptions toward ELL inclusion and accompanying modifications of coursework for ELLs in mainstream classrooms. A discrepancy existed between teachers' general attitudes of openness and affirmation toward ELL inclusion but with reservations about teaching particular ELLs. Teachers expressed a reluctance to work with very limited English proficient students. Teachers asserted a concern about the equitability of coursework modifications for ELLs. They held misconceptions about second language acquisition but demonstrated ambivalence toward participating in professional development for working with ELLs. Teachers did not perceive benefits for non-ELL students from ELL inclusion and additionally felt they did not have enough time to deal with ELL needs. Reeves suggests that further research remains for exploring teacher attitudes toward inclusion of ELLs in the mainstream classroom with the examination of teacher education and professional development initiatives that will result in successful inclusion of ELLs.

The most successful teachers of ELLs viewed culture group as a strength. Haberman and Post (1998) found that teachers making the most profound difference in schools with a high population of second language learners viewed being a member of a culture group as a source of strength and perceived them as capable of high esteem and self-realization. Successful teachers worked to understand culture groups and encouraged them to contribute to others in the classroom. They offered curriculum that was engaging, motivating, and interesting in ways that actively involved the students and made them responsible for their learning. Consequently, this led to higher achievement levels in their students. Higher self-efficacy in the teacher led to more positive views

about students and their ability to perform tasks in the classroom that translated into higher self-efficacy for their students. Haberman and Post (1998) cited self-knowledge, self-acceptance, respectful and caring relational skills, empathy, and self-reflection as part of the knowledge base of effective multicultural teachers.

**ELLs' perceptions of their language learning.** ELLs' perceptions of their learning may be a pivotal factor in their success in language learning. Dawson, McCulloch, and Peyronel (1996) investigated how ELL learners perceived their success or lack of success in language learning and found that the friendliness of the learning atmosphere was a key factor. A questionnaire with two open-ended questions was given to 120 students at the British Institute for Applied Learning Studies (IALS), and interviews were conducted with 20 of the students. The researchers asked what helped or hindered the students in learning a new language along with examples of times they thought language learning had been successful or unsuccessful. Students profited from learning from other students in a teacher-planned activity-based setting with increased opportunities to use speaking skills. They reported that the friendlier the setting the better the learning and they credited the teachers as having the responsibility to establish the atmosphere of friendliness. The students valued the affective side of the classroom and believed that it affected their ability to complete language tasks.

**Teacher experience and ELL performance.** Teacher preparation levels influence ELLs' efficacy, giving teachers more or less confidence based on whether they feel prepared to teach a population that brings language challenges to the classroom. Garcia-Nevarez, Stafford, and Arias (2005) determined that teachers' attitudes toward ELL students differed with the type of certification or endorsement they held. Teachers play a

vital role in the teaching and learning processes of students and have the power to be agents of change in their students' lives, if they are properly trained in culturally compatible teaching methods. The researchers surveyed 152 elementary bilingual and regular classroom teachers with three or more years of teaching experience. Through focus group interviews of the teachers the following themes were revealed: all the teachers believed that (a) prior knowledge transferred from the first to the second language, and (b) that using Spanish in the classroom elevated ELLs' self-esteem. Bilingual teachers believed that using the native language for instructional purposes was beneficial, while regular teachers were against using the native language for instructional purposes. Garcia-Navarez, Stafford, and Arias concluded that differences in teacher attitudes exist based on prior training experiences and that their attitudes toward other languages send messages about what is valued and not valued in school. The researchers recommended that future study needs to be done to compare teacher attitudes during their preservice training so that possible changes in teacher education could result in findings of differences are evident.

Stritikus (2006) analyzed additive and subtractive perceptions of teachers toward their ELL students. Additive attitudes in teachers were reflected in their belief that ELL students, their culture, and their accompanying values play a central role in student success. Teaching is enhanced when it occurs in contexts that are socioculturally, linguistically, and cognitively meaningful for the learner. Subtractive attitudes were reflected in the belief that multilingualism undermines learning in the classroom and that ELL students' progress will be severely limited by their use of their native language rather than English language in the classroom. Stritikus' research came from case studies

done with two teachers to understand how additive and subtractive visions for their ELL students play out in the classroom. The teacher practicing additive beliefs capitalized on her students' linguistic resources during their acquisition of English and saw their home language as a resource. This instructional choice resulted in student attitudes of enthusiasm and energy as students approached learning tasks. The teacher with subtractive beliefs saw the students' primary language as a weakness and barrier to English learning and consequently made instructional choices that were more prescriptive and tightly controlled and resulted in less enthusiastic learning environment.

According to Karabenick and Noda (2004) teachers' beliefs and attitudes about diverse learners, classroom practices and needs of ELLs impacted the quality of education provided. They searched for overall trends and typical responses and differences between teachers with more positive attitudes versus those with less positive attitudes toward ELLs in their classrooms. The researchers surveyed 729 teachers in elementary, middle school, and high school asking questions about their attitudes toward ELL learners, their beliefs about second language acquisition, what they felt about assessment procedures for ELLs, and how they interacted with ELLs' parents. They found that teachers' attitudes toward ELLs and bilingual education are equally important because they affect teachers' motivation to engage their students. These attitudes, in turn, translate into higher student motivation and performance. Teachers with more positive attitudes were more likely to believe that they were capable of providing quality instruction for ELL students. More research needs to be done on what successful techniques bridge the ELL home and school settings and how teacher preparation in the

legal, social, political and pedagogical dimensions of bilingual education can better prepare teachers to work with ELL populations.

**Differences in teachers' educational training and knowledge of ELL students and efficacy.** Teachers' ability to promote learning and their belief in what their students are capable of doing is a critical component of ELL student motivation (Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Tasan, 2001; Templin, Guile, Okuma, 2001). Increasing effective teaching has emerged as the means to improve schools, meet national education goals, and ensure that all students experience school success (Dalton, 1998; Banks, 2001).

Gatbonton (1999) explored the question of whether or not there is a body of pedagogical knowledge that experienced teachers utilized when teaching. Research has been done on overt classroom instruction (Lightbrown and Spada, 1993; Long 1983), but the investigation of the teacher's pedagogical knowledge means investigating more subtle factors such as the teachers' thinking and beliefs. Gatbonton's study aimed at discovering whether teachers access a set of pedagogical thoughts while they teach, and if there is any consistency among teachers in the patterns of pedagogical thoughts they reported. Experienced teachers were videotaped teaching ELL courses to adult learners. They were then asked to view their recorded lessons and to recollect aloud what they were thinking while teaching the particular segment being viewed. Gatbonton identified five themes from the teacher's self-report including: (a) handling the language items of the lesson, (b) factoring in the students' contributions, (c) determining the contents of teaching, (d) facilitating the instructional flow, (e) building rapport, and (f) monitoring student progress.



Of particular importance to this discussion is the teachers' affective assessment of the need to establish contact with and have good rapport with the students. They described rapport building as their need to ensure student comfort, to protect them from embarrassment, and to reinforce and to encourage them to persist in classroom tasks. Knowledge of desirable classroom atmosphere was indicated in the teachers' beliefs that rapport building was important but also in their decision making within the classroom. Gatbonton (1999) suggests further research needs to be conducted to find out if the teacher characteristics such as gender, personality, and training could affect the outcome in the ELL classroom. If training is identified as a contributor to teacher beliefs and decision making in the ELL classroom, can a pedagogical body of knowledge be acquired by ELL teachers during their pre-service training?

Mason (1999) conducted a study with two recent graduates of an elementary teacher education program in their urban teaching experience to see the teachers' effectiveness on the academic achievement of low SES minority students. He found that knowledge of individual students, preparedness for diversity of student needs, positive rapport with students, expectations for student success, and understanding of the students' ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development), accounted for the difference between what students can do independently and what they can do with assistance. Mason reiterated the need for teachers of multicultural populations to be knowledgeable and prepared to distinguish the special needs of this diverse population. Understanding these needs prior to teaching can help teachers to implement strategic teaching approaches and prepare classroom environments that enhance positive learning climate.

Increasingly, effective teaching has emerged as the means to improve low-performing schools, meet national education goals for all ethnic groups and ensure that all students experience school success (Dalton, 1998; Banks, 2001). Teachers' confidence in their instructional capabilities is highly related to their attitudes about their students, as well as their behaviors toward ELLs (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1981; Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991). Facella, Rampino, and Shea (2005) identified teaching strategies that help ELL students make connections between content and language, and that support their communication and social interactions. They interviewed 20 early childhood educators from two culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Massachusetts to identify effective strategies that helped their ELL students make connections between content and language. They found that strategies such as gestures and visual cues, repetition and opportunities for practicing skills, the use of objects, real props, and hands-on materials, and the use of multisensory approaches enhance ELL performance. Facella, et al., (2005) also discovered emotional engagement strategies used by the teachers that deepened ELL understanding. Effective ELL teachers made connections with parents, became familiar with the home language of their students to help increase their comfort level in the classroom, used positive reinforcement, and personal conversations with their students.

Second language learners with high self-efficacy outperform those with low self-efficacy. Templin, Guile, and Okuma (2001) suggested that there are specific ways to encourage this self-efficacy and that student self-efficacy and achievement can be raised through teaching. Teachers need to be selected to work with ELLs who have an understanding of this student population and who have an understanding of students' culture and learning styles. Teachers also need to understand the special needs ELLs have

as they learn both English as a language and continue to learn academic content in this new language. Curriculum choices need to be taken into account when considering the unique perceptions and beliefs that ELLs have in a setting where the students are trying to learn in another language.

Haberman (1995, 1999, 2004) has done extensive work in the area of teacher selection for second language learners and low SES schools. He has coined the phrase “star teachers” to designate teachers who are so effective in the adverse conditions of working in failing schools or school districts that they are never held back from being successful teachers. Several characteristics make them stand out (a) persistence, (b) physical and emotional stamina, (c) caring relationships with students, (d) commitment to acknowledging and supporting student effort, (e) willingness to make mistakes and keep on trying, (f) a focus on deep learning, (g) commitment to including all students in the learning process, and (h) most importantly, their desire to protect student learning.

Haberman (2004) cited two formerly failing elementary schools whose teachers have had an impact on student achievement, one serving low-income Hispanic students in Texas and the other serving African American students in a depressed area of New York. Teachers for these schools were selected using the “Star Teacher” selection criteria. Both schools designated as failing schools were moved out of that category within a year. The Texas school went on to become one of the highest achieving schools in the district within this short period of time. Haberman cited highly effective teachers, led by a highly effective principal, as responsible to closing the achievement gap.

Similar results were found in Haberman’s work with the Milwaukee Public School District (Haberman, 1999). Once again, teachers were selected according to the

“Star Teacher” criteria, but a further step of implementing curriculum to promote and ensure academic success for all learners was added. Teachers were empowered to create and teach a rigorous academic, integrated and multicultural curriculum meant to meet the needs of diverse students. Again, the results were similar to the two schools in Texas and New York with student achievement increasing dynamically. Haberman concluded that teachers make the difference in the choices they make in the classroom when they believe that all children can learn. This difference in these cases led to positive changes in student self-efficacy and stunning results. The common denominator seemed to be the teacher and his/her beliefs and perceptions about learning and the students.

Bandura’s (1996) description of the factors that affect student self-efficacy coincides with these findings. High efficacious teachers: (a) arrange the classroom environment so that all children encounter numerous successful enactive experiences, (b) surround the students with models to encourage them to achieve, (c) engage in verbal persuasion believing that all students can learn, (d) hold high expectations for their students, and (e) make sure the classroom is a safe place for learning that focuses on what children can do and not their perceived current abilities. This environment in turn enhances students’ performance and achievement and can raise students’ beliefs about their self-efficacy.

The body of research indicates that teacher efficacy does affect student efficacy and their resulting performance. More specifically with ELL populations, teacher personal beliefs and expectations are reflected in their instructional choices as well as the classroom atmosphere they construct for learning. When teachers feel more adequately prepared to teach ELLs, their beliefs, attitudes, and practices change and that in turn

impacts the quality of education provided. If teacher preparation is vital in shaping teacher efficacy then research needs to be done at the teacher preparation stage of development before teachers enter the classroom.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Little research has been done in the area of preservice teachers' attitudes and perceptions of ELL student achievement (Baum & King, 2006; Bullogh & Gitlin, 2001; Reeves, 2004). If teachers' educational training and knowledge of a second language is related to teachers' personal beliefs, behaviors and practices (Shin & Krashen, 1996), then it would follow that searching for effective preparation techniques would be in order. If teachers' attitudes toward other languages send messages about what is valued and not valued in school (Reeves, 2006; Garcia-Nevarez, Stafford, & Arias, 2005), then research in the area of teacher attitude or language attitude formation is an important area to explore. While most research in this area has been conducted with teachers already in the classroom, more research needs to be done on how to effectively prepare ELL teachers before they get to the classroom.

Findings from a study of novice teachers and their preparation for working with ELL populations should be helpful for teacher preparations programs, inclusion of specific educational training procedures for new teachers. Since teacher attitudes and perceptions inform instructional decision making and student motivation, then exploring novice teachers' perceptions of their attitudes toward ELLs is in order.

The purpose of this study is to explore the preservice teachers' perceptions and beliefs about their ability to teach ELLs. The study will further explore what they perceived prepared them best to work with diverse populations. Specifically, this study

will examine the assumptions and beliefs pre-service teachers have about the ever increasing population of cultural and linguistic newcomers to the American schools. Because these attitudes and perceptions are still being formed and developed in teacher training institutions, they may be able to be shaped and guided to embrace strategies to address cultural and linguistic diversity.

The following are the specific research questions relating to the central phenomena:

What are preservice teachers' attitudes and perceptions of the inclusion of ELLs in the mainstream classroom? The supporting sub questions are:

- 1) What are preservice teachers' perceptions of their ability to connect with ELLs in the mainstream classroom?
- 2) How do preservice teachers perceive their self-efficacy for teaching ELLs and ability to connect with ELLs relates to ELL achievement?
- 3) How do preservice teachers perceive their teacher education preparation program prepared them to effectively address issues of diversity, both cultural and linguistic, in the mainstream classroom?
- 4) What are preservice teachers' attitudes toward the use of native language in the classroom?

The primary target of explaining knowledge is, according to Moustakas (1994), "the understanding of meaningful concrete relations implicit in the original description of the experience in the context of a particular situation" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 14).

I hypothesize that the descriptions of preservice teachers experiences with ELLs in the regular content classroom will reveal what the preservice teachers think, feel, and

perceive about their relationships with ELLs in this particular situation and will further reveal what they believe prepared them to connect with ELLs in the classroom.

## **Chapter 3**

### **METHODS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents the methods and procedures used in this study. I will offer a rationale for the methodology chosen for this study, describe the research participants, follow up with a description of the study's instrumentation and procedures, and conclude with a description of data analysis. In this study, survey and interview methodology was used to gather data from preservice teachers enrolled in teacher education programs at liberal arts colleges in the Midwest. After surveys were completed, participants were asked to volunteer for follow-up interviews. Quantitative data analysis was conducted on the survey data and qualitative coding analysis was applied to the interviews. Finally, both quantitative and qualitative data were mixed and analyzed.

#### **The Research Question**

The methods and procedures of this study are designed to answer the following research question: What are preservice teachers' attitudes and perceptions of the inclusion of ELLs in the mainstream classroom? The supporting sub questions are:

- 5) What are preservice teachers' perceptions of their ability to connect with ELLs in the mainstream classroom?
- 6) How do preservice teachers perceive their self-efficacy for teaching ELLs and ability to connect with ELLs relates to ELL achievement?
- 7) How do preservice teachers perceive their teacher education preparation program prepared them to effectively address issues of diversity, both cultural and linguistic, in the mainstream classroom?



- 8) What are preservice teachers' attitudes toward the use of native language in the classroom?

### **Research Methodology**

In order to triangulate the research, a mixed method research design called Explanatory Sequential Design was adopted (Creswell, 2003). The two-phased design allowed for collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by the subsequent collection and analysis of qualitative data. By integrating the two types of data, the qualitative data explained and expanded on the quantitative results (Creswell, Plano-Clark, 2003).

The purpose of this type of strategy allowed me to gain a broader perspective of the population of preservice teachers by recording data about their present views and current attitudes and practices (Creswell, 2003). Collecting interview data from all survey participants allowed me to describe in more depth the personal experiences of the participants. The strength of the survey collection strategy allowed for data collection from a wider pool of participants while still providing personal data. It also helped me gain perspectives from preservice teachers' attitudes by supplying a variety of data types.

### **Research Design**

Before any data collection, the proposal for the study was approved by the Institutional Review Boards of both the researcher's university as well as the three research host universities. As noted previously, the research was conducted in two phases: quantitative and qualitative. In the first quantitative phase, participants were surveyed with the *English Learner Students in Mainstream Classrooms Survey-Revised*. Participants from the three higher education institutions were invited to volunteer for the

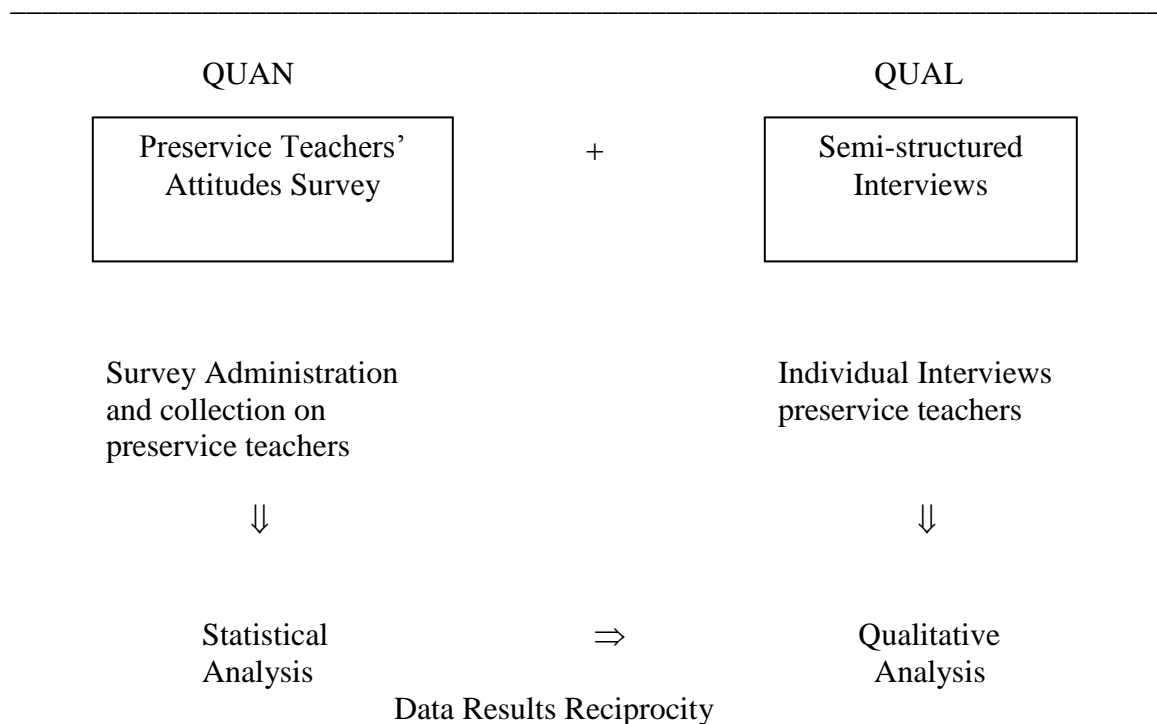
second phase of the study, which had a qualitative design. Semi-structured, individual interviews were conducted before any data analysis. After collecting quantitative and qualitative data, the researcher integrated the results in the data analysis stage (see Figure 1).

For the quantitative phase, the researcher used a survey questionnaire designed to quantify preservice teachers' attitudes toward ELL students in the mainstream classroom and the teachers' perceptions of their ability to connect with ELLs and provide instructional strategies for them. The advantages of the survey method include the convenience of self-administration, lower cost, anonymity, and the standardization that ensures that similar data can be collected from groups and interpreted comparatively. The weaknesses of this method include variable response rates, the development of general questions that are appropriate for all respondents, and the researcher's lack of opportunity to deal with the "context" of the questions. There is also likelihood that participants may not recall information or may not tell the truth about a controversial question. The researcher administered the survey through a personal invitation given by the institution's department head to ensure a higher response rate. Moreover, the researcher was able to conduct semi-structured individual interviews to explore the participants' responses in depth.

Following the quantitative portion of the design, the researcher conducted semi-structured individual phone interviews to collect the qualitative data. Telephone interviews are less expensive and more accessible than face-to-face interviews and the researcher had ready access to anyone by telephone. Interviews allowed the researcher to clarify answers and seek follow-up information. The researcher was able to delve into

the participants' experiences, feelings, ideas, insights, expectations, and attitudes about the topic being discussed. The disadvantages are that the response rate may not be as high as face-to-face interviews but are considerably higher than a mailed questionnaire. Unlike face-to-face interviews, it is more difficult to establish rapport with participants because body language cannot be read. The researcher began the interview by establishing rapport at the beginning of the interview by talking with the interviewees about their personal experiences with ELLs and carried the interview forward by managing the discussion through probes and follow-up questions.

Figure 1.

*Research Method Map*

*Note.* From *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (p. 214), by J.W. Creswell, 2003, London: Sage.

## **Participants**

Participants for this study were selected from a population of teacher education preservice teachers using a purposeful sampling strategy (Creswell, 2003). Selection criteria were based on criterion sampling, a sampling technique that limits participants to those meeting some criterion judged as the best method for selecting participants (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The criterion implemented for this study was: preservice teachers formally admitted and officially enrolled in a teacher education program. Forty-one participants were sampled from three Midwestern higher education institutions offering teacher education. The institutions are located in urban population centers in the Plains States that allow for the placement of pre-service teachers in schools with higher ELL populations as compared to their suburban counterparts.

Although the purposive sample procedure decreases the generalizability of findings, the findings will generalize to the specific population of preservice teachers but not to all areas of teaching. The findings may be subject to other interpretations due to the qualitative parts of the study.

## **Demographic Information**

Forty-one participants completed section A of the survey. Section B asked participants to complete this section if they had ever had an ELL student enrolled in a practicum, field experience, and/or student teaching classroom placement. Twenty-nine participants reported that they had experienced ELL inclusion in a practicum, a field experience and/or student teaching. Twelve participants reported no experience working with ELLs in their preparation experiences. The percentage of preservice teachers with ELL experience was 71%, while 29% reported no experience with ELLs. Finally, the respondents were asked about the average number of ELL learners currently enrolled in

their field experience classrooms. Of the twenty-nine participants with ELL students in their current classrooms, the classroom mean of ELL students was 19.

Section D of the survey gathered additional demographic information from the respondents. The information included participants' subject areas, academic grade level, gender, native language, second language proficiency level, and language minority/ELL training. Frequencies and percentages for each subject area are summarized in Table 1. A majority of the participants (56.1%) were seeking the elementary endorsement, 19.5% were Middle School endorsed, and 24.4% here from various secondary subject area endorsements.

Table 1  
*Subject Area Frequencies and Percentages*

Subject Areas	Frequencies	%
Elementary	23	56.1
Middle School	8	19.5
Secondary- English	2	4.9
Secondary-History	5	12.2
Secondary-Math	1	2.4
Secondary –Music	2	4.9

Participants' years of experience with reference to their corresponding year in teacher education ranged from 2 to 4.5 years with a mean of 3.75. The majority (N=33) of the forty-one participants were female (See Table 2 for the breakdown).

Table 2  
*Descriptive Statistics for Participants' Gender*

	Elementary(gr. K-6)	Middle school(gr. 4-9)	Secondary(gr. 7-12)	All Participants
<i>Gender</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>
Male	0 (0)	3 (37.5)	5 (50)	8 (19.5)
Female	23 (100)	5 (62.5)	5 (50)	33 (80.5)
Total	23	8	10	41

All participants were native English speakers (100%). Only 16 participants (39%) spoke a language other than English. The participants reported the following endorsement areas as their areas of specialty with a majority of participants with either an elementary or a middle school endorsement (75.6 %). Forty-one (N=41) preservice teachers in total participated in the study. Among the 41 participants, 23 were elementary majors, 8 were middle school majors, and 10 were secondary majors.

The 41 participants ranged in year in school from sophomores to senior/student teachers, 16 participants were student teachers and made up the majority (39%) of the participants. Among the other participants, three were sophomores (7.0%), 10 were juniors (24.4%), and 12 seniors (29.3%). Participants' years of experience in practica ranged from 2 years to 4.5 years. The mean years of experience of all participants were 3.75.

Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics for Participants Year in Teacher Education Program*

	<i>Elementary</i>	<i>Middle School</i>	<i>Secondary</i>	<i>ELL</i>
Year	<i>n ( %)</i>	<i>n ( %)</i>	<i>n ( %)</i>	<i>n ( %)</i>
<i>Sophomore</i>	1 (2.4)	1 (2.4)	1 (2.4)	0 (0)
<i>Junior</i>	7 (17.1)	2 (4.9)	1 (2.4)	0 (0)
<i>Senior</i>	7 (17.1)	0 (0)	5 (12.2)	8(19.5)
<i>Student Teaching</i>	8 (19.5)	5(12.2)	3 (7.3)	4 (9.8)
<i>Total</i>	23	8	10	12

**Instrumentation**

This section describes the selection and implementation of the survey instrument used in this study: a survey with added open-ended interview questions as well as semi-closed scenario questions.

**The survey instrument.** Beginning with the quantitative instrument, I surveyed respondents' attitudes, opinions, perceptions and beliefs indirectly. "A straightforward question can all too easily evoke a rhetorical or ideological response, and this is often not what the research requires" (Sapsford, 1999, p. 106). The *ESL Students in Mainstream Classrooms: A Survey of Teachers* (Reeves, 2006) is shown in previous research to be an appropriate instrument to measure teachers' attitudes and perceptions of ESL inclusion.

The original survey was piloted with 30 middle school subject area teachers and

further administered to 279 high school subject area teachers.

I revised Reeve's survey to develop a new instrument for the present study to be used with preservice teachers: *The ELL Students in Mainstream Classrooms: A Survey of Preservice Teachers – Revised* (ESMCS-Revised- See Appendix A). Because the survey has already been used in both a pilot study as well as a full research study with in-service teachers, extending its use would be important for surveying the teachers very early in their teaching careers.

**Themes measured by survey.** The revised survey (see Appendix A) was used to measure preservice teachers' attitudes and perceptions of ELL inclusion through each of six factors first identified by Reeves (2006) in an examination of the research literature on content teachers of ELLs. The factors are: a) preservice teachers' perceptions of language acquisition processes, the roles of English and the ELLs' native language; b) preservice teachers' perceptions of the need for coursework modifications for EL students, as well as their attitudes toward modification practices; c) preservice teachers' attitudes and perceptions of the time ELL inclusion requires of teachers; d) preservice teachers' attitudes and perceptions of appropriate teacher education coursework and support for working with ELL students; e) preservice teachers' perceptions of the educational environment resulting from ELL inclusion in mainstream classrooms; and f) preservice teachers' general attitudes toward ELL inclusion.

The first factor examined attitudes toward language as well as self-perceptions about language in two different categories: second language acquisition and the role the native language of the ELL student should play, and the role of English as the acquired language. The survey questioned the participants' perceptions of how long a second



language takes to acquire. The role of English and the native language of the ELL student were investigated through questioning participants about the usefulness of the native language as an ELL acquires English. The participants were questioned about their perceptions of English as the official language of the United States.

The second factor explored participants' attitudes, perceptions, and practices of modification of course work for ELLs. Survey questions delve into the participants' willingness to modify course work for ELLs and the supporting justification for why modifications of course work of ELLs. The survey questions asked participants about the appropriateness of four modification practices and the frequency with which they would apply the practices to ELLs in the classroom.

The third factor probed the participants' attitudes and perceptions of the time ELL inclusion requires of the teacher. Three different aspects were highlighted: Did the preservice teacher have enough time to deal with the needs of the ELL students in the mainstream classroom, did the ELL student require more of the preservice teacher's time than other students in the classroom, and did the time the teacher spent on ELLs interrupt the progress of the entire class.

The fourth factor investigated the participants' teacher education program experiences in working with EL students in the mainstream classroom. Participants were asked to rate the adequacy of their program to train them to work with ELL students and whether or not they perceive they need more training. The survey asked participants about their perceptions of how the administration of the school and the cooperating teacher supported their work with ELLs.

The fifth factor explored the participants' attitudes and perceptions of the

environment of the mainstream education setting when ELLs are included in the classroom. Participants were asked to rate their perceptions of how positive the learning environment was when ELLs were included in the mainstream classroom and the benefit or disadvantage of having ELLs in the mainstream classroom.

The sixth factor explored the participants' general attitudes toward the addition of ELLs to the classroom by asking them to rate how enthusiastic they were toward ELL inclusion in their own classroom experiences. General attitudes of the preservice teachers was further probed by asking questions about the level of English proficiency ELLs have acquired and how the proficiency level affects the participants' perceptions.

**Survey description.** The survey consisted of 45 items: 18 answerable on a four-point Likert scale, 11 answerable using a frequency table, 4 open-ended questions, 2 case study questions, and a set of 10 demographic questions (e.g. endorsement area, year in program of study, gender, second language experience, and training in teaching EL students).

Section A of the survey used a four-point Likert scale asking respondents to read a statement and check the box which most closely expressed their opinion: strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. The purpose of this section was to probe preservice teacher attitudes and perceptions as these self-evaluations relate to their experience level with ELL students.

Section B of the survey asked respondents to read a statement and check the box which most closely articulated the statement's frequency in their classroom experiences: most or all of the time, some of the time, or seldom or never. Section B was designed to examine strategies that preservice teachers are developing by discussing their direct

experiences with ELL students. Statements in this section explored the classroom practices and strategies that preservice teachers were implementing in the classroom with ELLs, perceptions they were building about the inclusion of ELLs in the mainstream classroom, and their perceptions of the adequacy of support they received to work with ELLs. Those respondents whose classes contained no EL learners will be instructed to skip to Section C.

Section C of the survey contained four open-ended interview items: 1) Please list and describe what you consider the *greatest benefit(s)* of including ELLs in the mainstream classroom, 2) Please list and describe what you consider to be the *greatest challenge(s)* of including ELL learners in the mainstream classroom, 3) Please describe what you consider helps you connect with ELLs in the classroom, and 4) Please list all the ways you think your teacher preparation program is preparing you to address issues of diversity in the classroom.

Section D contained demographic information including respondents' endorsement areas, gender, the year in their preparation program, native language, second language proficiency, and types of language minority training. Demographic information was gathered to provide a description of the sample.

For this study, the survey was modified to reflect the new population of respondents during the preparation period in a higher education institution with a teacher education program. The survey was initially administered with a pilot study feedback group of 10 participants. Respondents were asked to evaluate the survey items for clarity, appropriateness and potential bias. Participants were also asked for an estimation of the length of time needed to complete the survey.

## **Procedures**

An IRB proposal was submitted to the Institutional Review Board with a detailed description of the research including the methods, procedures to be used, a description of the population to be studied, descriptions of the steps to minimize risks to participants, and to ensure confidentiality, an informed consent letter for each participant. Letters from the colleges authorizing me to conduct the study at their institutions were also included. The proposal was submitted with surveys and sample questions.

Potential participants were selected by gaining permission from the department chairs of three institutions of higher learning in a Plains State inviting all preservice teachers in their programs to participate in the survey instrument. The participants were screened with a preliminary questionnaire (see Appendix A) to determine their similarity to the preservice teacher definition used in this study.

Those meeting the criteria were asked to participate in the survey data collection. An email invitation was sent to the possible participants with an explanation of the purpose of the study and the procedures. The survey and the nested qualitative open-ended questions (see Appendix A for formatting) were then administered online to the qualified participants. The email included the researcher's contact information. The contact email included a link to the on-line survey in the email. Informed consent was assumed when respondents linked to the survey instrument.

The intent of the open-ended procedure used with all the participants instead of a select group chosen for interviews allowed for the collection of diverse types of data over a wider spectrum of the population of pre-service teachers. The on-line survey allowed for economic design and rapid turnaround of data collection. The cross-sectional design

taken at one point in time allowed for a sampling across a larger population.

The survey with the open-ended questions was administered through electronic delivery using Zoomerang. An on-line self-administered questionnaire decreased the cost of data collection and enhanced data availability and convenience. Students were contacted through procedures delineated by the department chairs of their institutions of higher education. An email inviting them to participate provided a link to the survey and allowed them to submit the survey directly back to Zoomerang keeping the responses anonymous. Participants' submission of a completed survey indicated informed consent.

### **Data Analysis**

**Survey analysis.** Quantitative data analysis was conducted to identify the factors that influence the relationship of preservice teachers to ELLs in the mainstream classroom using descriptive and inferential numeric analysis. I then qualified the quantitative data by Cronbach's Alpha data analysis of the survey instrument. From the quantitative data, factors were determined that can be compared with the themes that emerge from the qualitative data.

Survey data were analyzed descriptively to answer the research question: What are preservice teachers' attitudes and perceptions of ELL inclusion? Since the research questions probed what preservice teachers perceived about their relationship with ELL students, describing and developing themes from the data were an important aspect of the quantitative data translation to a descriptive analysis and thus giving an in-depth understanding of the central phenomenon.

A univariate system of analyses was conducted to provide an "examination of the distribution of cases on one variable at a time" (Babbie, 1990, p. 247). Because each survey item matches an attitude or perception of ELL inclusion as identified from the

research literature, the univariate analyses conducted will include frequency distributions, percentages, measured central tendencies and standard deviations that would include from the quantitative items. Participants' responses were measured according to the strength of their (dis)agreement with the survey items.

Each of the research sub questions were analyzed keeping in mind this research question: 1) what are preservice teachers' perceptions of their ability to connect with ELLs in the mainstream classroom? Attributes of variable, percentage of frequency, mode, median, mean, and range provided descriptive data that was analyzed to indicate patterns of responses. Standard Deviation provided inferential data and analysis of a relationship between variables.

2) How do preservice teachers believe their self-efficacy for teaching ELLs relates to ELL achievement? Since the question asks about the influence of two variables, self-efficacy and the ability to connect with ELLs on ELL achievement, descriptive analyzes was conducted using descriptive attributes of variable, percentage of frequency, mode, media, mean, range and standard deviation.

3) How do preservice teachers perceive their teacher education preparation program prepared them to effectively address issues of diversity, both cultural and linguistic, in the classroom? The questions probes the affect of teacher preparation programs on perception of diversity issues in the classrooms requiring a descriptive analysis using descriptive attributes of variables, percentage of frequency, mode, media, mean, and range.

4) What are preservice teachers' attitudes toward the use of native language in the classroom? Descriptive data analysis was conducted using descriptive attributes of

variables, percentage of frequency, mode, media, mean, range, and standard deviation providing indication of a relationship between variables. Information is reported about the participants who did or did not return the survey. Description of the data shows numbers and percentages describing the respondents and non-respondents.

Next, the effects of non-respondents on survey estimates and how their responses would have changed the overall results of the survey indicate discussion about response bias. Wave analysis was used by grouping returns by week intervals to see if the answers to a few select questions change from the first week to the final week (Creswell, 2003).

The scores from the Likert Scale of Section A and Section B of the survey was translated into numerical values yielding numerical data from which statistical analyses was then performed. Section A's Likert Scale were assigned the following numeric values, strongly disagree = 1, disagree = 2, agree = 3, and strongly agree = 4. In section B, seldom or none = 1, some of the time = 2, and most of the time = 3. Responses were entered into SPSS to determine frequencies (modes) and percentages for both sections. Further analyses of mean and standard deviation were conducted of Section A data.

Yes and no answers were converted to numeric values with the code yes = 1 and no = 2 and entered into SPSS. Question 4 of Section D was coded male = 1 and female = 2. The sub question of Section D, number 6, was coded beginner = 1, intermediate = 2, and advanced = 3. Statistical analyses including frequencies and percentages were conducted for these questions.

Survey questions that require respondents to give a numeric quantity were entered into SPSS and frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were calculated.

Section D demographic information includes questions that require respondents to

write in their answers. For question #1, values were given to grade level endorsement areas as follows, K-6 = 1, grades 4-9 = 2, and secondary grades 7-12 = 3. Question 2 asks respondents for subject area they will be prepared to teach. Number assignments were given to subject areas and entered into SPSS as follows: Elementary education = 1, English = 2, Mathematics = 3, Natural and Physical science = 4, Social Studies and Social Science = 5, Vocational and Industrial Education and Home ecology = 6, Business = 7, Art and Music = 8, World Language = 9, and Physical Education and Health = 10. Question 7 asks respondents to identify specific coursework that prepared them to work with language minority groups. Categories and numbers assigned to the types of training included, university coursework = 1, seminar training = 2, ESL endorsement = 3, all = 4. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for these questions

### **Open-Ended Questions and Interview Data Analysis**

The survey included open-ended interview data and interview questions that were analyzed qualitatively. All responses to questions were transcribed to a word processing document. Responses were read for patterns and coded using a modified Van Kaam method of categorization and coding analysis (Moustakas, 1994). Because interview research data deals with capturing the essence of the issue, data analysis needs to examine the pre-service teachers' experience from many sides, angles, and perspectives until a consensus or unity of experience is achieved (Moustakas, 1994). The modified Van Kaam method begins with textual-structural descriptions and develops a composite description of the meanings and essences of the experience seeking to ultimately represent the group as a whole. The following steps were followed to determine major themes and codes:



1. Horizontalization: List every relevant statement from each participant and group them in a preliminary way.

2. Reduction and Elimination: Sort the statements to determine the invariant constituents by testing them against two requirements:

a. Is the experience necessary and sufficient for understanding the experience?

b. Is it possible to abstract and label it? If so, it is a horizon of the experience.

Eliminate all expressions that do not meet this requirement or are overlapping, repetitive and vague. The horizons that remain are the invariant constituents

3. Clustering and Thematizing the Invariant Constituents: Cluster the invariant constituents that are related into thematic labels that are the core themes of the experience.

4. Final Identification of the Invariant Constituents and Themes by Application:

Validation

Check the invariant constituents and their accompanying themes against three requirements:

a. Are they expressed explicitly in the complete transcription?

b. Are they compatible if not explicitly expressed?

## **Chapter 4**

### **ANALYSIS OF THE DATA**

#### **Introduction**

In the present study, I drew on multiple research methods that were combined to help examine and compare preservice teachers' attitudes toward ELLs in content classrooms. I used a mixed methods convergent parallel design consisting of two distinct phases: quantitative followed by qualitative. Triangulation was used to secure an in-depth understanding of preservice teachers' perceptions and to present richness to the whole. The research question guiding this study is, "What is the essence of the self-perceived relationship of preservice teachers to English Learners in the mainstream classroom?"

To give a detailed answer to this question, I included the results analyses generated with both quantitative and qualitative data. First, I administered a survey based on a review of the literature that measured six themes of attitudes and perceptions of ELL inclusion. Second, a qualitative inquiry consisting of an interview examined the ELL experiences of five preservice teachers.

This chapter presents the results of an analysis of the survey and interview data. First, I present survey return rates and demographic data on the survey and qualitative participants. The remainder of this chapter is divided into the six themes of the survey: language, modification, time, training and support, educational environment, and general attitude toward ELL inclusion. Findings for each theme are presented with supporting data from the survey and the qualitative inquiry. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the findings.

## **Return Rates**

I sent the survey to prospective participants in March with a follow-up reminder sent two weeks later. The total number of surveys distributed in three schools was 192. Of those distributed, 41 were returned, giving the study a 21% return rate.

## **Cronbach's Alpha for English Learner Students in Mainstream Classrooms Survey**

I began with an overall examination of the quantitative data in this mixed methods study. The analysis examined the relationships between questions answered by preservice candidates on the survey, *English Language Learner Students in Mainstream Classrooms*. The first step in the analysis was to explore the relationships between the item responses from the survey using a Cronbach's Alpha test. I noted significant correlations and will discuss them below.

The reliability (internal consistency) of the measure was assessed using coefficient  $\alpha$ . The scale was in the acceptable range for experimental measures (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994)  $\alpha=.78$ . The internal consistency coefficients for the individual factors were in the acceptable range (Time=.69; Training and Support=.78). Coefficients for factors in the low but acceptable range were Language = .57; General Attitudes =.43. While the reliabilities are in low but acceptable range (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), they are typical in motivation research (Wilson & Trainin, 2007). There were two problematic coefficients in the low range which will be discussed in the following section (Modification =.32; Educational Environment =.33).

The correlation of questions asking candidates to evaluate the role of ELLs' native language in the mainstream classroom suggests that candidates view native language use in the classroom as an asset to ELLs' achievement, but seldom or never see

this practice happening in their experiences in their field experiences. What candidates' believed should happen with ELLs' native language did not coincide with what they observed.

Questions relating to modifications teachers make in the classroom for ELLs had a moderately low correlation indicating low internal consistency between the questions  $\alpha = .32$ . A moderately low correlation of questions referring to Modification may be due to the wide range of questions in this section, the variety of types of modifications surveyed, or the perception of effort as it relates to achievement. Low correlations may also be a result of asking all participants to respond to half of the questions concerning modifications and the other half of the questions asked of participants who identified themselves as having ELL inclusion experience.

Several questions related to the factor of Time and the results indicated a high correlation between questions. This may indicate that participants agree that ELL students may require more time or effort from the teacher but the commitment is within the bounds of what is expected of the roles and responsibilities of teachers.

Questions dealing with the factor of candidates' Training and perceptions of the support coming from administrators, other teachers, and ELL staff members were highly correlated and indicated that there is agreement with all participants that they feel prepared but could always use more training. Those participants who identified themselves as currently working with ELLs indicated that only some of the time did they feel like they were supported by other ELL professionals.

Another lower correlation related to factors designed to examine the overall educational environment of the classroom. This may be due to the fact that only two

survey questions dealt with the factor of Educational Environment and both questions were asked of all participants whether they had experience with ELLs or not. Finally, questions relating to the factor of General Attitudes about ELLs in the mainstream classroom by preservice teachers indicated a moderate correlation. All participants agreed that ELLs should be in the mainstream classroom and they, as teachers, would welcome their addition to the classroom.

### **Quantitative Survey Themes**

Using a review of relevant literature, six themes were identified that differentiated the attitudes and perceptions of teachers regarding English Language Learners in mainstream classrooms. The themes included: (a) Language, (b) Modification, (c) Time, (d) Training and Support, (e) Educational Environment, and (f) General Attitudes toward ELL inclusion in the mainstream classroom. These themes informed the evaluation of the results from the survey questions and the qualitative discussion. I will next discuss the quantitative and qualitative findings for each theme, with survey findings for each theme discussed first, followed by the findings from the qualitative interviews.

**Language.** This section reports findings related to the theme of Language from Sections A and B of the survey and the open-ended survey questions from Section C. I define Language as the use of English in the mainstream classroom. All participants answered questions in Section A of the survey, while only those who indicated they had worked with ELLs in the classroom, answered questions from Section B. The responses from Section C reported in this section came from all the survey participants and emerged through the process of integration and coding.

A subset of survey items measuring preservice teachers' attitudes and perceptions relating to the theme of Language included the subcategories of : (a) participants' attitudes and perceptions towards English as the official language of the United States (A11), (b) the role of ELL students' native language use in the classroom (A16, B22, B23), and (c) participants' perceptions of the length of time necessary to acquire English (A17). Table 1 (Appendix F) report the means, standard deviations, and frequencies from Section A and Section B of the survey.

Discussion of each category of the survey begins with the results of items in Section A and B followed by open-ended questions found in Section C.

Candidates perceived the importance of making English the official language of the United States, but not to the exclusion of the use of ELLs' native languages in the classroom. A majority of respondents (78%) were in favor of making English the official language, but a majority (81%) also disagreed that native language use should be avoided in the classroom. Candidates believed that ELLs needed to use their native language in the classroom and should be allowed to use it, but when asked about what they experienced in their field experiences, they did not see this practice occurring in the classroom.

A little over half of the candidates perceived that acquisition of a new language takes longer than two years (51%). When candidates with ELL experience were asked if materials were provided for ELLs in their native language, they reported that they seldom or never saw materials specific for ELLs being provided in the class.

The survey items dealing with the factor of Language indicated an overall consistent variability of answers. The highest variability was associated with

participants' beliefs about legislation that would make English the official language.

Survey participants answering this question consisted of those who worked with ELLs in the classroom as well as those who reported that they had never worked with ELLs. The lowest variability came with the survey item asking those participants who had worked with ELLs if they provided materials in ELLs' native language. There was strong agreement that native language materials were seldom or never provided.

Section C of the survey asked participants if English was their native language (C35) and if they spoke a second language (C36). All 41 participants indicated that English was their native language. Of the 41 participants, 16 said they spoke a second language. Ten (24%) of the participants who spoke a second language indicated that they were at the beginning proficiency level and 16 (76%) participants said they were at the intermediate level of language proficiency.

Survey participants were asked for additional comments on the inclusion of ELL students in K-12 classrooms. One participant indicated there was a need for English language teaching beyond the regular classroom and the best way for ELLs to learn English was to be "pulled-out during the day to focus completely on the English language." Another participant thought that unless the content area teacher's class was small enough, "ELLs should be co-taught to give them extra help, or they should be taught content and English in a separate classroom until they demonstrate proficiency in academic English." Further, a participant indicated that "teachers who have multiple ELLs in their classroom needed to have access to outside language resources such as translators, and ELL specialists to aid them in their teaching." Another participant thought ELLs should be fully included in the classroom and "if quality hands-on, real-life

teaching is going on, than ELLs will have no problem learning right along with the rest of the class.” The participant talked about the need for ELLs to learn in the English language.

I do however think that allowing English-speaking in the classroom will help them learn it more quickly. There are other ways to communicate so that they don’t have to speak their native language and can learn English words more quickly if you let them speak their language all the time, than they will rely on that.

Another participant indicated that including ELLs in the classroom benefited all students because it gave native English speakers the opportunity to learn the language of the ELL students as well and this taught them to be more compassionate toward ELLs.

**Modification.** This section reports findings from Sections A and B of the survey and the open-ended survey questions from Section C. I define Modification as any changes made in the classroom for ELLs who are unable to comprehend all of the content the instructor is teaching.

A subset of survey items measured preservice candidates’ attitudes toward: (a) the modification of subject area coursework for ELLs, (b) preservice candidates’ attitudes, perceptions, and reported behaviors on modification strategies, and (c) preservice candidates’ perceptions of the difficulty of justifying ELLs’ coursework modifications to English proficient students.

Modification practices and strategy discussion were further divided into two categories: coursework modifications and grading procedure modifications. The discussion of coursework modifications is divided into even smaller categories of (a)



simplification, (b) lessening quantity of the coursework, (c) giving more time to complete coursework, (d) using native language, and (e) grading procedure modifications included the relationship of grading and student effort.

Candidates perceived ELL coursework modification positively related to justification of that modification of ELL coursework to other students in the mainstream classroom. Candidates believed that coursework modification positively impacted ELL students' participation in the mainstream classroom settings. Participants believed that they would be able to justify modifying coursework for ELLs to others in the classroom and said teachers should modify content area coursework for ELLs in the mainstream classroom. The overall feeling by the participants was that coursework modification was an important part of their teaching and a natural part of the classroom experience even by other students.

***Simplification.*** Candidates perceived simplification of coursework did not meet the needs of ELL students. Over half of the participants disagreed that it was a good practice to simplify work for ELLs. There was some variability in the response to course simplification when all participants were surveyed.

***Lessening quantity of coursework.*** In general, candidates viewed lessening the quantity of coursework for ELLs negatively as a means of modification for ELLs although there did not seem to be a clear consensus held among all the members of the group. Approximately half of the participants disagreed that lessening the quantity of coursework was a good idea, while a little less than half of the participants agreed that ELLs should be expected to do less work than other students in the classroom to help support their content learning. When asked what they actually observed in their

classroom experiences, most survey participants with ELL inclusion experience reported they occasionally saw the amount of coursework for ELLs being reduced in the classroom. An overwhelming majority of the participants said they seldom or never saw the amount of coursework for ELLs lessened. Candidates seemed conflicted on whether or not this was a viable modification strategy given that ELLs have an English language deficit and may struggle with the amount of homework that is given in a regular classroom.

***More time.*** Candidates perceived that increasing the amount of time given to ELLs to complete coursework sometimes occurred in the classroom. A majority of participants with ELL inclusion experience reported seeing more time on assignments occasionally. A nearly equal number of participants (21%) seldom or never observed more time being given, while on the opposite end of the spectrum, an equal number of participants (24%) observed seeing ELLs allowed more time on an assignment most or all of the time. This particular type of modification strategy was not asked of all candidates taking the survey but only asked of candidates with ELL inclusion experience reporting on what they observed occurring in classrooms.

***Using native language.*** Candidates' perceived use of native language as a means of modification was not seen in the classroom settings in which they participated. Further, when asked if materials in the student's native language were provided, they revealed that even less frequently were materials included in the ELLs' home language. A majority of candidates (83%) observed that ELLs were rarely allowed to use their native language in the classroom. Candidates (96%) rarely or never saw materials being offered to ELLs in native language. Overall, participants agreed that ELLs were not given

access to their native languages in the class as a means of supporting English language learning.

***Grading and effort.*** Candidates did not express a clear consensus on whether or not ELL students should be graded on the results of their work and not just because they display effort in completing the assignment. When all candidates were asked if teachers should not give a failing grade to ELLs if they saw that the students had displayed effort, half agreed. Those candidates with ELL inclusion reported seeing this practice occurring some of the time in their classrooms. They did not agree about whether grading should be done based on achievement or effort and their experience in the classroom seemed to back up this ambivalent feeling.

Comments from the open-ended questions in Section C of the survey asking participants for further discussion concerning the inclusion of ELL students revealed participants' beliefs that ELL inclusion requires deeper commitments by schools and teachers. Preservice participants highlighted the need for district funding to be used for the hiring of specialty ELL teachers and translators to work in collaboration with the mainstream classroom teachers. They felt that the best thing for ELL students was inclusion into the mainstream classroom with pull-out time during the day to focus on the English language. With proper scaffolding provided by content teachers and a co-teaching setting with ELL teachers, ELL students would be able to learn content until they demonstrate proficiency in academic English.

**Time.** All participants were asked about their perceptions of the amount of time subject area teachers dedicate to ELLs in their classrooms. The mean for the survey item 4 in Section A, indicated that participants disagreed that subject area teachers do not have

enough time to deal with the needs of ELL students. Seventy-three percent of the total group of respondents believed that teachers have enough time to deal with the needs of ELL students.

To explore further the perception of the amount of time required of a teacher with inclusion of ELLs in the classroom, the participants who identified themselves as having had experience with ELLs were asked to respond to two statements, (a) the inclusion of ELL students in classes increases the teacher's workload, and (b) ELL students require more teacher time than other students. Overall, candidates reported observing in both cases that ELL students required more work from the mainstream teacher. Only one respondent reported that seldom or never was the teacher's workload increased. Therefore, most of the respondents believed that ELL students increased the teacher's workload.

Finally, candidates were asked about their attitudes and perceptions regarding whether or not ELL students in a class slow the progress for the entire class. In general, almost two-thirds of the participants indicated that the class progress is slowed for the entire class at least some of the time. More than half of the participants thought that ELL students can slow the entire class progress. Only 3 respondents, though, felt strongly that the teacher's work with ELLs negatively affected the progress of the rest of the class.

The open-ended questions in Section C of the survey generated the most discussion from participants on this topic of time. Survey participants expressed the overall belief that the mainstream classroom is the best placement for ELLs. One participant credited quality, hands-on, real-life teaching strategies implemented by the teacher as the key to allowing ELLs to learn alongside the rest of the class. Participants

felt the mainstream class provided ELLs with a natural setting in which to practice English.

Another participant thought that the best way for ELLs to learn English was to interact with peers their own age. Time spent in the regular classroom would allow ELLs this interaction time with native speakers even when the setting may seem intimidating for them.

A number of participants mentioned the need for a co-teaching relationship between the content teacher and the ELL teacher as a balance to the workload for the teacher. As one participant wrote, "This is the most efficient model in the long term. Keeping ELLs in the mainstream classroom with support helps them develop compensation skills and maintains the retention of those skills while promoting growth in needed areas." The participants indicated that the mainstream classroom teacher should be provided with assistance and should be monitored to make sure that he/she provides quality instruction. If the load is too much for the content teacher, the ELL teacher should also help in the mainstream classroom.

Survey participants perceived that ELLs required extra time commitment from the teacher. One participant credited the time commitment to ELLs who "seemed to have additional learning challenges which complicated their educational process." These students required additional assistance and needed their work simplified or minimized. ELLs also required extra instruction outside of the classroom. One survey participant indicated that while they seek additional help, he felt that ELLs' extraordinary effort makes them usually able to stay on track with the rest of the class. Finally, another survey participant felt it was the teacher's responsibility to determine when ELLs may

need extra attention and to either be willing to help them or find someone else within the school that could help tutor them if needed.

**Training and Support.** I measured preservice candidates' attitudes and perceptions of the training that they had received already and were also interested in receiving in the future for working with ELL students. Additionally, I investigated candidates' perceptions of the adequacy of the support they received from their cooperating teacher and college supervisor, including an assessment of the frequency with which candidates conferred with the ELL teacher. Table 1 (Appendix F) displays means, standards deviations, and frequencies from Section A and Section B of the survey.

Candidates somewhat disagreed with the statement, "I feel prepared as a teacher to meet the academic needs of ELL students in the mainstream classroom." Respondents were interested in receiving more training in working with ELLs, indicating that they acquired a good start in their preservice coursework and practica but still needed to learn more to feel comfortable with meeting the needs of the ELLs as well.

Respondents were then asked about how they felt they interacted with ELLs in the classroom. They showed comfort with the ELLs who they had worked with, saying they in general disagreed that they struggled with teaching ELLs in their field experiences but at least a third of the respondents felt they were really struggling. Overall most of the participants also indicated that they knew what to do with ELLs in the mainstream classroom but a third of them still indicated that they did not know how to help ELLs.

When asked about the degree of support that candidates (with ELL inclusion experience) perceived they received from cooperating teachers and college supervisors, participants said they received help some of the time from these professionals during

their practica. I next explored perceptions of support the participants received from the ELL specialists in the building. Participants indicated that they received support at times from ELL teachers. When asked to clarify the amount of time participants conferenced with ELL teachers, they seem to contradict their perceptions stating that they rarely or never met with ELL specialists in the building.

Survey participants listed a variety of means that they perceived prepared them to work with ELLs in the open-ended survey items in Section C. Some candidates indicated that they completed an ELL endorsement as part of their elementary and middle school preparation. They mentioned specific courses geared toward ELL pedagogy including anthropology, linguistics, assessment and methods for ELL. Candidates also talked about the importance of practica or field experiences with ELLs as a means of preparing themselves to teach.

Survey participants cited the need for training to work with ELL students for regular classroom teachers.

Teachers need to be trained on how to handle ELL's academically, socially, and emotionally. Teachers who have multiple ELLs in their classrooms need to have access to outside resources to aid them (translators, literacy facilitators, ELL specialists, intervention material, etc.).

Some participants mentioned that their subject methods classes addressed ELL pedagogy. For example, they were required to design lesson plans as if they had an ELL student in the class. The methods course work gave them tools to do this. Other participants described their program as being embedded with ELL coursework as part of

their degree program. They were required to take courses in ELL Methods and ELL Assessment while earning a resulting endorsement in ELL. Finally, some participants mentioned the enhancement of their preparation through a study-abroad program for teachers. This program allowed them to study and teach ELLs in another country while learning the strategies that are needed to function in another culture, at the same time that they were learning how to teach ELLs.

**Educational Environment.** This section reports findings on candidates' perceptions of how ELLs' affect the classroom environment and if their presence benefits other students in the classroom.

Candidates perceived that ELL inclusion positively impacted the educational atmosphere in the classroom. The majority of the survey participants (97%) agreed that ELL inclusion would be a good thing for the content area classrooms. Candidates also agreed that the other students in the subject area classroom would benefit from the inclusion of ELLs. Ninety eight percent of survey participants agreed that having ELLs in the regular content classroom would be advantageous for all students.

In Section C and the open-ended questions, survey participants shared that they believed that the presence of ELL students in the mainstream classroom created an environment of compassion that benefited both ELLs and native speakers in the classroom. ELL students were an encouragement for other students to learn another language, as they interacted with ELLs. Another survey participant viewed ELLs in the classroom as advantageous to the environment adding an affirming presence because they were "fun to work with" and were "sweet". Overall, ELLs were viewed as a positive



additive to the educational environment not only for themselves, but for the teacher and the other students.

**General Attitudes.** This section reports findings from the survey and qualitative inquiry related to participants' general attitudes toward the inclusion of ELL students in mainstream classes.

Candidates indicated that they believed it was not necessary for ELLs to attain a minimal level of English proficiency before being included in a general education class. A majority of the participants (70%) indicated that they felt ELLs' language proficiency was not a factor in whether or not they could be successful in regular classroom settings.

Candidates believed that they would welcome ELLs in their classroom. Only one participant stated that he/she would not welcome the inclusion of ELLs, while the rest of the candidates said they would welcome ELL inclusion.

The open-ended survey items in Section C also indicated that participants felt that the mainstream classroom was an appropriate placement for ELLs. Comments included, "inclusion with some pull-out time during the day would be the best way for these students (ELLs) to learn" and "I believe they should be included in the classroom if quality hands-on, real-life teaching is going on." Another participant said, "I think it is important to include ELL students in the classroom. Sometimes the best way that they can learn English is to interact with peers their own age." ELLs are best served within the mainstream classroom according to another participant who felt that "keeping them in the mainstream classroom (with support) maintains retention of those skills while promoting growth in needed areas." Finally, another participant felt that "as much as

possible” ELL students should be included in K-12 classrooms because, according to the participant, it provides a “natural setting in which to practice English.

### **The Qualitative Inquiry**

Interview data were coded and interpreted using data reduction to distill essential codes describing the essence of the participants’ experiences with ELLs (Creswell, 1998; Huberman and Miles, 1994). Each interview was approximately 30 minutes long. The interview was transcribed word for word to Microsoft Word, then processed to reveal codes. No changes were made in the transcript regarding content, usage, or structure. The researcher takes responsibility for any grammatical and/or mechanical errors in the transcript.

**Research question 1.** What are preservice teachers’ perceptions of their ability to connect with ELLs in the mainstream classroom?

*Perception #1: Enhancing connections – teacher responsibility.* Interview participants were questioned about their attitudes toward ELL students in their content classroom and how they perceived teachers should connect with ELLs. They expressed an overall positive feeling toward inclusion of ELLs into mainstream classrooms. The preservice teachers felt that working with ELLs was their responsibility and they were committed to extending themselves to put in the extra work and resources needed to help ELLs become proficient in their classes. Jack summarized the responsibility he felt as a regular classroom teacher by saying, “You are going to do whatever it takes to make them (ELLs) succeed.”

Jack said it was the classroom teacher’s job to adapt learning for different needs and that included ELLs and their needs. Kate agreed that the ELL students were better

served in the regular classroom especially if extra support was available to them. A good working relationship between the classroom teacher and the ELL teacher made for the most optimal environment for ELLs. By staying in the mainstream classroom in regular content classes, the ELL students were exposed to more English language experiences.

I think the students would get a more complete education or a more complete understanding of the subject at hand if they had additional support in the classroom that is reinforcing to what the teacher is teaching.

Connectivity with ELLs improved as the teacher perceived that he/she had the resources to work with ELLs. An openness to learn new strategies and experiment with what works increased the teacher confidence and opened up more possibilities for working effectively with ELLs.

Nancy called attention to the teachability of teachers as they work with ELLs as an important piece of the teacher's responsibility. Success in the classroom required her to be "a teachable person" willing to help people. Describing her cooperating teacher as one of those teachers who was successful in working with ELLs, she said "she would do anything for anyone and I want to be respectful of her. She is very open."

Nancy also identified other characteristics of responsible teacher of ELLs as openness and a listening ear. Again, she talked about her cooperating teacher and the amount of wisdom and experience she had in the area of ELL teaching. Nancy felt that new teachers should seek out veteran teachers and "listen a lot" because they know what they are doing.

See what they do. See what works. If it is something that you

don't necessarily like, make sure you are watching and make sure you know.

Finally, Nancy said that since ELLs cannot always understand what you are saying in the classroom "you have to work harder". She did not believe that this was something extra a teacher had to do but what teachers were supposed to do. She called it "the point of being a teacher." She believed it was the teacher's responsibility to work hard to make sure ELLs understand what the teacher is teaching to make things easier for them to understand. She stressed the importance of the teacher's role to make sure ELL students do not fall through the cracks.

A lot of people say they are so low and don't even try. That's your job. Make sure you work with them, make connections with their parents because most of them want to help. If they have a way to help you, they will.

Being responsible for making connections with ELLs in the classroom had benefits for the teacher as well. Preservice teachers also perceived that working with ELLs had actually changed them as teachers. Alice called her experiences in the mainstream classroom a "stretching time" for her as she negotiated the ups and downs of making sure ELLs were effectively incorporated into the regular classroom.

It was really a stretching time. Part of it was frustrating but I'm so glad it happened that way because there was no way I could prepare for that or would want to prepare because I don't know if my mind would be as open as it was.

Alice credited her experiences with ELLs in an international practicum setting as a time that helped prepare and shape her as a teacher. She said she became a different person as she learned to work with ELLs in that setting and she was able to bring those experiences into the classroom.

I am a different person than before I went. The whole China trip was an intricate part of my growth as a person and a big element in my life as a teacher. I'm different now from that trip and I think a lot of that came with the flexibility, going with the flow, and taking opportunities as they came.

Jack said he saw working with ELL students in his classroom as a good opportunity for him to develop better teaching skills. As he worked with his ELL student, Jack felt that he was changing as well. The strategies he was learning increased his confidence and made him a better teacher. "I look back now and I was really nervous at the beginning but I am so thankful for having the opportunity to have her in my classroom to help prepare me."

***Perception #2 Enhancing connections – creating a positive environment.***

Preservice teachers perceived that along with their responsibility to make connections with ELLs, they needed to make the classroom a comfortable place for ELLs. Interview participants disclosed a variety of characteristics that aided in creating a positive educational environment for ELLs. Kate called it "oneness" which comes from having an open mind. Jack also shared the opinion that openness on the teacher's part was important. He stated that patience was also important and gave the ELL student a secure feeling that made them want to perform at higher levels. Karen said she has more

patience with her ELL students than her other students in the classroom. She saw them working hard to “get it” and the teacher needed to be patient while they did that. Karen talked about “serving” her students. She thought her attitude of going into the classroom to serve her ELL students created a positive learning environment.

A number of the interview participants described the need for an atmosphere of trust. Jack said the more his ELL student “felt like you were going to be the person to help her, the more she trusted you.” When he took the time to work with her, she, in turn, felt he was trustworthy and worked harder. Nancy said comfort and security was the biggest thing her ELL students needed. She shared a story of a little kindergarten child coming into the classroom on the first day crying and screaming. She worked to assure him that he would be safe and made a connection with him. “He and I have this little grin. I can make him smile just by looking at him.” Nancy believed that positive, specific praise helped create an affirming educational environment and ELL students responded to that.

Creating a positive environment for ELLs meant that the teacher needed to work at seeking out ways to connect with ELLs. An important perception mentioned by all the interview participants was the need to actively seek ways to bond with their students, to make connections with them. Karen said the relationship part was the most important thing for her and what gave a bond to her students. Jack also believed that a bond with his ELL student was necessary.

When I think she thought I was willing to give her extra resources to help her, we started to connect more.

Jack stated that as a youth pastor in his former job, he could use a lot of the same skills in the classroom. A lot of the techniques and skills he used to get to know students in his youth group he found very useful to transition over to teaching.

Nancy shared her unique way of making connections with her students. She noted that her cooperating teacher “bragged about them (ELL students) in front of other teachers because “other teachers would compliment them on how they were standing in the hallway. She always says, “Well, we just have the best kindergarten class. They love that.” The cooperating teacher encouraged her to develop her “goofy” side of making fun of herself or exaggerating her actions to make her students laugh. She felt it brought down their barriers and helped them to become comfortable with her. She worked to make them feel like they were a family. She described an especially reticent ELL boy in her classroom this way:

We have a little connection and when he feels comfortable, when he he feels like he is doing well, he’ll try all the time. That’s how I get him to talk.

***Perception #3 Enhancing connections – high expectations.*** The interview candidates agreed that having high expectations and believing that their ELL students were capable was a critical part of the educational environment. Nancy explained that at the kindergarten level it was important to establish early on that they were treated like all the other students and expected to learn along side them. “They learn responsibility early and it’s their (ELLs) responsibility to practice. She (classroom teacher) does have high expectations”. She said they work to encourage and build the ELLs’ belief in themselves as good students.

We tell them all the time, “You guys are little smarties. We can’t trick you with anything!” They love that because we are all together in this.

The sense of community formed as all students felt they were a part of an achieving classroom that was a key element of ELL instruction.

***Perception #4 Reducing connections – undue burden.*** Some of the preservice teachers interviewed perceived that ELLs posed an undue burden on the regular classroom teacher. When they perceived that ELLs were extra work for them, they saw ELLs as an encumbrance to the classroom. Rather than feeling that it was their responsibility, they felt it was too much for them.

Kate talked extensively about ELL inclusion and what she called the “undue burden on the classroom teacher.” She explained that teachers can be successful working with ELLs but they should be lauded for the additional work required of them. It is necessary for them to extend themselves so that ELLs feel welcome in the mainstream classroom. She felt it was hard for the teacher to know from day to day who got what from the teaching because of all the different learning needs. Kate said that in spite of the extra work required of them, the teachers she met in her training were committed to helping their ELL students. Even though additional support was not available, they were willing to go the extra steps to provide that support. She said it was a burden for the student as well. They had to come and go in the mainstream classroom and did not always have the benefit of instruction when they missed concept teaching in the regular classroom. When no additional help is provided, it causes an undue burden on both the teacher and the ELL student.



***Perception #5 Reducing connections – lack of collaboration.*** Interview

participants perceived that pull-out programs impaired ELL consistency in the regular classroom and made things harder for the teacher and the students. It was hard for ELLs to make up for lost time from the regular classroom instruction and it was difficult to catch students up. It took a lot of extra work from the teacher and the student as shared by this interview participant,

I think to expect the student to be responsible for getting that information and trying to process it because they haven't had the benefit of having been instructed was just not the right way to facilitate learning.

**Research question #2.** How do preservice teachers believe their self-efficacy for teaching ELLs and ability to connect with ELLs related to ELL achievement?

***Perception #1: Enhancing ELL achievement – collaboration.*** Survey

participants thought that collaboration with other teachers enhanced the achievement of ELLs in their classrooms. The in-depth interviews revealed a perception voiced by participants that ELLs require more commitment by the school district in the area of staffing with ELL-trained teachers. The district needed to commit to providing for ELL-trained teachers who could work with content area teachers to collaborate on how best to meet the needs of the ELL students included in the mainstream classrooms. Jack cited that the ELL teacher in his building was especially helpful to him as he taught in a social studies content classroom. The ELL teacher encouraged him by giving him suggestions and notes like “great job” or “next time try this.” Jack felt that his meetings with the ELL teacher were efficacious since he could discuss his own lack of experience with ELLs and

how he could help his ELL student get the most of what they were doing in the classroom.

Collaboration with parents also aided in supporting ELL achievement in the content classroom. Nancy mentioned frequently in her interview that parents played an important part in the ELL students' success in the classroom. She credited the involvement of parents as partners with the teacher, as an asset to what the students were learning in the classroom.

I used to be scared of parents. I'm not scared anymore. I used to not talk to them because of that. They are partners. She (the cooperating teacher) makes sure they know that. She tells them, "I need your help at home to practice."

According to Nancy, parents were initially reluctant to enter the school because it was intimidating and they did not understand the language. When the teacher welcomed and invited them to be involved in the classroom, the teacher reported that ELLs were relieved and felt a connection with the teacher. It broke down the separation between home and school for them. Nancy said, "They were welcome in their child's classroom or school and they loved it."

Nancy gave another example of using parents for background information on her students to help the teacher understand the cultural implications of some of the behaviors of her ELL students. When a new arrival to the kindergarten classroom wore a head covering, the teacher had no idea what her background was or why she wore the covering. When the ELL student's father came to conferences and "spoke good English", she was surprised.

The little girl, Leah, who wears a head covering, I had no idea of what their background was until the dad came to parent-teacher conferences and spoke good English. He described their community and their ways to us. He said what he's trying to do is go out to schools and tell them about how their culture is. And we were like, "Oh, everything makes a whole lot of sense to us now."

Nancy felt parents played a key role in opening communication and promoting understanding for the teacher. This in turn enhanced learning in the classroom and helped the teacher understand the cultural implications of the behaviors of their ELLs.

***Perception #2: Enhancing ELL achievement – focusing on commonalities.***

Alice and Karen both noted how their preparation, especially their experiences in a study abroad program for teachers, enhanced their appreciation for ELLs and their adjustments to a new culture. Alice stated that a common cultural connection like an American pop song playing on the radio gave an instant connection with the Chinese people with whom she was interacting. The song became the commonality between two people who did not speak the same language and gave them a common experience for which they could connect. Karen called it a "good meeting ground." She described her experiences as a non-native speaker in China and the desire to connect with native speakers as being important for her understanding of ELLs in her student teaching classroom. Finding a common experience or event aided her in being able to open up.

The common ground for us was about entertainment. They knew a lot about our culture in entertainment and it was a good way to start conversations. Even music was a good meeting ground.

Alice also expressed the importance of knowing enough basic phrases in the Chinese language as she negotiated a new culture were helpful. She felt the key for her was when she was able to communicate her needs enough to a shop owner or in the market place; it gave her common ground with native speakers. Both Alice and Karen expressed the importance of finding the language opening that would begin the communication across the two cultures.

We couldn't even communicate with them (in the classroom) and even to be from totally different parts of the world and from totally different ways of life, we still had a commonality. We could find something in common.

Once the commonality was found, communication increased and was enhanced. It was an important realization for both of them that influenced their teaching of ELLs. Alice called it a "privilege" to have a cross-cultural experience in being in another culture and finding the crack of commonality that opened the doors of communication in the classroom.

***Perception #3 Enhancing ELL achievement – using culturally relevant teaching strategies.*** Interview participants documented a variety of ways they observed meeting the needs of ELLs in the mainstream classroom. Kate spoke of the need to go "above and beyond" with them because they are still learning English and require more from the teacher. Kate felt that a necessary part of working with ELLs meant using more culturally relevant teaching methods and the importance of the teacher having an idea of what cultural benefits ELL students bring to the classroom. The teacher needed to create a comfortable classroom environment, a safe place where ELLs are encouraged to

practice and use English. Kate felt that ELL learning relationship could be hampered when asked to do things that are at odds with their culture and that they maybe unprepared to do.

Interview participants discussed a variety of ways to scaffold learning for ELLs. Kate explained that the teacher should start by making personal connections with ELLs relationally through even small things like making eye contact, holding individual conversations with ELLs, and providing scaffolding with questioning techniques that would help them to succeed.

Jack said after his experience with the ELL student in his classroom, he would try to find an additional or alternate curriculum that would work better for ELLs. He also noted that he would be willing to rewrite or adapt the curriculum if he felt that it would better meet their needs.

Interview participants perceived that a critical scaffolding technique that facilitated ELL learning was the need to have the opportunity to use their native languages in the mainstream classroom. Kate said it was important when ELLs worked together cooperatively in groups and they spoke their home language. She also explained that as they are beginning to achieve literacy in the content classroom, the teacher should accept all answers especially on assessments. She believed that ELLs' oral language was often their strongest literacy area and could mask a lack of fluency in reading and writing. She shared "while you are reinforcing grammar structure, I think allowing or accommodating that deficit by accepting all answers would be one way to help them cope. Now, I'm not saying that by any means we need to dispense with error."

Providing alternative ways to express themselves especially in their areas of strength will help ELLs learn faster.

Both Jack and Kate mentioned the need for more resources available for ELLs. Kate compared faith-based schools with public schools citing the possibility that faith-based schools were at a disadvantage because they had less access to resources. Faith-based schools have the desire to help but do not have access to resources. She suggested a partnership with public schools in “some type of community type thing” that would mutually benefit ELL students. Jack had experience in public schools and felt that even in that setting there were not enough resources for ELLs. Jack’s district had only one ELL teacher between multiple buildings and was not as readily available in his building.

Scaffolding techniques meant “showing not telling” as Nancy phrased it. Nancy shared that the curriculum needs to be changed to a “more show them” curriculum, doing more showing than talking, hands-on activities. These teaching techniques not only worked with ELLs but all students. She said, “You could teach any classroom like you are teaching ELLs and they would probably do so much better. Don’t always sit there at talk at them.”

Preservice participants suggested that the need for literacy activities embedded in the curriculum was an important curriculum modification for ELLs. Nancy observed that a kindergarten classroom would be a good model for teaching ELLs in any setting. In a kindergarten, literacy is a natural avenue for instruction since all the students come at the beginning stages of literacy. According to Nancy, a good deal of the work of kindergarten is centered on literacy and literacy is fundamentally entwined with the

“work” of kindergarten. Nancy explained, “We don’t do anything that different (in kindergarten), not specifically for ELLs; more for kindergarten in general.”

Scaffolding also meant that what the teacher does in the classroom needs to have real-life purpose. Nancy felt that ELL teaching needed to go beyond concept teaching to the use of activities and assignments in a more contextualized learning. What is done in the classroom needs to be connected to the real-life especially to the lives of the ELL students.

Compelling assignments also encouraged ELL achievement. Nancy referred to the need for learning to be fun because she felt that with the extra responsibility of learning English while also learning content material, learning could become burdensome for ELLs. Taking time to design activities that would draw out her students helped make learning more accessible.

I think reading needs to be fun because at some point in their life it becomes horrible. That’s what I’ve been trying to do in my little reading group as we read through one of the book. If we have extra time I tell them, “Okay, we’re going to stop and we’re just going to have free-for-all discussion time. I’m going to let you tell your stories.” Make them enjoy it.

***Perception #4 Enhancing ELL achievement – teacher characteristics.*** A

common perception from the participants was the teachers' roles in making ELLs feel comfortable in the mainstream classroom. Jack said an important characteristic was patience. It took time for the ELL student to adjust and learn the language sufficiently to participate with all the other students in the classroom. Jack further cited persistence as a characteristic that goes along with patience. The teacher needed to be willing to repeat

things several times, so that ELLs can understand what you are asking them. Sensitivity to the ELL student and their culture is an important characteristic the teacher should foster according to Alice and Karen. Jack and Nancy specifically named openness on the teacher's part as an attitude that would encourage ELLs to connect.

***Perception #5 Inhibiting ELL achievement – lack of resources and time.***

Interview participants talked about factors that not only enhanced ELL progress in the content classroom, but they also discussed inhibiting factors to ELL achievement.

Participants believed that ELLs required more time and extra work from the teacher.

Jack remarked that he was focused on getting things done for ELLs in the classroom and that meant putting in extra hours and staying after school. Even though it required extra time, he believed it was a good idea because the extra time meant he could meet the ELL student's needs, which was important to him. It is important to them not to overlook the ELLs in the classroom. He stated that, "There's so much thrown at you but it is worth it to see the student succeed and not fail or get embarrassed when papers are passed back and they see their grades."

***Perception #6: Inhibiting ELL achievement –need for curriculum adaptation.***

Survey participants perceived that teaching ELLs is different from teaching other types of students. The ELL strategies required of mainstream teachers created more work for the teacher some of the participants believed. Jack felt that there was a difference in being prepared for teaching what he called his "normal" students and being prepared to teach his ELL student.

Nancy differentiated between teaching ELLs and native speakers as well but clarified that there were similarities as well. "You could teach any classroom like you are



teaching ELLs and they would probably do so much better for you.” ELL teaching methods are deeper, richer ways to teach and are value-added methods that while requiring extra time would add to the overall effectiveness of learning in the classroom.

Nancy proposed that an ELL kindergarten room was the best model for teaching ELLs because of its heavy emphasis on the teaching literacy skills. Kindergarten is a natural setting for learning how to speak a new language. As the curriculum does not have to be a separate curriculum, one for the native speakers and one for the ELLs since they are all working on content together while learning literacy skills.

I have been thinking a lot about kindergarten rooms as a model for teaching ELLs you do things naturally and differently because you know that they are all coming knowing nothing so you do a lot more work to bring them up to speed.

***Perception #7: Inhibiting ELL achievement – lack of ELL background information.*** Getting background information on the student and applying it to the classroom setting was something that all the participants mentioned to be a challenge. Kate alluded to the challenge of trying to get enough background information, “what and where your students are from and what they know is kind of in a way similar to knowing any student when you are coming to the classroom” but with a language barrier. Kate believed it was necessary for her to get to know her ELLs and to learn about their culture through the student himself, other teachers in the building, mentor teachers who may be familiar with the student’s family, and with community resources. Once she collected this information, the next step she said was incorporating it into your teaching.

**Research question #3.** How do teachers perceive their teacher education program prepared them to effectively address issues of diversity, both culturally and linguistically in the mainstream classroom?

***Perception #1 Teacher preparation coursework.*** Interview candidates were asked about what they perceived prepared them for working with ELLs in the mainstream classroom. Candidates talked about their teacher preparation coursework, experiential learning preparation, and the characteristics of a teacher working with ELLs,

Four of the five candidates in the qualitative inquiry had received specific training in teaching ELLs. All four had completed a supplemental endorsement in ELL as part of their teacher preparation program, three at the undergraduate level and one at the graduate level. Kate credited her teacher preparation program for readying her for working with ELLs with targeted pedagogical training.

Kate also cited preparation in special education training as being helpful. Jack agreed that a course in special education gave him tools to work with ELLs. He said he only had a little training with ELLs and wanted more coursework in his college degree program but also from the district in which he was working.

Nancy believed that methods coursework in literacy was critical to her understanding of how to work with ELLs. She credited a strong literacy knowledge background from courses in literacy methods, literature for children and adolescents, and diagnostic and remedial reading as well as practicum experiences tied to those courses. She said she believed that coursework can only go so far and needed to be combined with practical experiences. Nancy considered her work in after-school care programs as effective preparation for working with ELLs since she worked with predominantly

Spanish-speakers. She described the relationship between coursework and experience this way, “Classes build a framework for you but you have to fill it in on your own by actually doing it and spending the time.”

***Perception #2: Spending time with ELLs.*** All the interview participants spoke about the value of their experiences with ELLs that helped them to become prepared to work with them in the classroom. Kate said she was drawn to working with the large Spanish-speaking population in her parish. She credited her desire to connect with adult ELLs as the thing that drew her into a course of study working with ELLs. She had a strong desire to work with the adults to help improve their potential to become economically secure. Jack said that while direct preparation to work with ELL students was helpful, the more experience teachers had before they entered the classroom, the better off they would be once they entered the teaching field.

Karen cited her experiences internationally as fundamental to her success in teaching ELLs in the classroom. She said that the direct experience in another culture helped incorporate new ideas into her teaching and became an integral part of her preparation and training. These experiences with ELLs in her study-abroad program taught her what to expect. Karen felt that being immersed in another culture prior to entering the classroom made her more confident in her teaching ability. Socializing with ELLs and building relationships with them helped “calm her nerves” and reassured her that once she was in the classroom, she had “done this before.”

Working with adult ELLs provided another avenue that provided real-life experiences for the interview participants. Both Karen and Alice worked with adult ELL literacy classes while in their teacher preparation programs. They agreed that the

experience gave them more knowledge for teaching, and they both said that there was a reciprocal aspect to the experience. They were helping ELL adults learn to read but they grew in their knowledge of how to teach ELLs as well. They reported that “it helped us.”

Karen described it this way:

I think what really helped us was going to the adult ELL English classes – not so much the teaching aspect of it, but it really helped us become immersed into that culture and to learn how to interact with them.

Another place for garnering ELL experience was in an outreach program that Nancy participated in that gave her experiences in another culture. Visiting Mexico and working in that environment helped her appreciate many cultural ideas that shaped her training with ELLs. She said the connections she made with Hispanic kids helped her to understand this population and gave her quicker access to her ELL students when she did her field work in the classroom. They were not some “strange, alien children coming into her classroom that you don’t know what to do with them” They were just kids like all the others in the classroom, they just needed the teacher to work harder to make things easier for them to understand things which is “the point of being a teacher”, she said.

Alice and Karen talked extensively about their experiences in an international study abroad program for teachers as pivotal in their training for ELLs. Interacting and living in a place where they experienced what ELL students would feel when they came to the U.S., gave them a depth of understanding that just coursework preparation could not.

Jack, Nancy, and Karen reported that their practicum placements helped them to develop skills for working with ELLs. Teaching in a sheltered setting under a cooperating teacher helped them figure out what was important when teaching ELLs and helped prepare them.

***Perception #3: Teacher traits.*** When asked about what they perceived were the characteristics of a well-prepared teacher, survey participants reported a number of characteristics. Kate believed that resourcefulness and compassion were important. She said teachers need to have a “great work ethic” and that she “worked hard”. She felt teaching ELLs required persistence even in the face of extra work. She drew on her past experiences to help her persevere and knowing that she had the skills and the experience helped fuel her confidence.

Jack perceived that ELL teachers needed collaboration skills in the mainstream classroom. The teacher would make a bigger impact on ELL learning if he/she worked closely with the ELL teacher. The mainstream classroom teacher needed to seek out help and connect with those who would be helpful with ideas for working with ELLs. He felt teachers needed to be approachable and willing to work together to create ELL-friendly teaching strategies. He believed that a big problem in his district was the lack of ELL teachers and a deficit in extra help as a result. He believed that more ELL teachers were needed in districts. The ELL teacher servicing his building had to cover three to four other buildings as well and could not concentrate her help in one building.

Another important characteristic of teachers was their self-efficacy. Nancy perceived that she had the skills and abilities to work with ELLs and this helped her to become a proficient teacher.

**Research question #4.** What are preservice teachers' attitudes toward the use of native language in the classroom?

*Perception #1 Language factors that facilitate: English + native language use.*

Interview participants perceived that the ELL student's native language was an important component of instruction in the mainstream classroom and use of it should be encouraged by the teacher. The teacher needs to create an environment in the classroom that promotes language use both of the students' native language as well as English language use. Participants believed that a safe classroom environment encouraged language production and the mainstream classroom provides a favorable location where language can be practiced in the context of content instruction. Teachers also pointed to outside factors that influence language acquisition such as financial, economic, and family issues.

Katie shared that she encouraged her ELLs to use their home language in the classroom especially when doing more complicated tasks. Lack of language skills could keep them from full participation and using the home language could be the key to unlocking communication.

Nancy indicated that mutual understanding of each other's languages helped open up language barriers. "I speak a little Spanish to them. They'll get all excited and it seems to open them up. It is as if they are saying to her, "Oh we can talk to each other!" She identified what she called simple things such as being able to ask them their names or saying "hi" makes them try speaking English more. Nancy stated "even having a little language makes a connection." She noted one example with a kindergarten boy who she was trying to encourage to talk. It was hard for him to talk because he was so nervous.

Accepting an answer he gave even if it was not perfect and giving him praise encouraged his use of English.

Karen reported a similar encounter with ELLs in her classroom and called it “getting on their level”. She would have them teach her Spanish words and find ways to incorporate the words she learned into her instructions and teaching. She found that using the student’s native language in instructional venues made a difference with her ELLs and opened them up to a second language.

Karen felt a helpful communication aid was the use of body language especially when she had nothing else she could use, “Facial expressions and hand gestures would tell a lot when you worked with ELLs whose language had no similarities to English.” She credited study abroad experiences where she learned that adding gestures and body language could open communication. She translated the practice into her classroom experiences with teaching her ELL students.

Nancy believed regular classroom teachers believed their ELL students would acquire English readily in their classrooms. She described interactions with parents and the kindergarten teacher, pointing out the expectations both groups had for their ELL students. The parents wanted the teacher to know that their children had little English language and might struggle in the classroom. The classroom teacher responded positively and confidently with no question that this could be achieved. “They have it. And they do.” Nancy reported.

Jack described a willingness to be persistent in understanding what his ELL student was communicating. Persistence facilitated a connection with ELLs and enhanced language learning.

It was tough at first because I would have to have her repeat things several times so I could understand what she was asking but once we kind of got past that and I was willing to give her the extra resources to help her, we started to really connect more.

Nancy shared that it was important to encourage her kindergarten ELLs to use their English. She felt that her excitement about any use of English at the beginning stage of acquiring the language encouraged the use of English language.

Always speak English to them. One little girl kept trying to ask a question. She would ask in Spanish and Ms. T would say, “In English!” She’d get a few words out but it would be enough to get the meaning and we’d be like, “Yeah! That’s the answer.

***Perception #2 Language factors that facilitate: Trusting environment.*** All those interviewed indicated that there was more to language than just verbiage; language open doors to other levels of communication. Jack credited language as the gateway to a relationship that grew with his ELL students. The more his ELL students felt they could trust him, the more they opened up to him.

***Perception #3 Language factors that facilitate: Outside factors.*** The interview participants mentioned financial and economic factors that facilitated language acquisition. They also perceived that family factors facilitated language use and knowledge of those family dynamics was important for teachers.

Kate called attention to the need for stability in families of ELLs. She believed the key for this segment of the population is assistance in learning English so that



financial and economic stability comes faster. When parents of ELLs especially learn English it increases the chances that the family as a whole would attain greater stability in the community.

Alice spoke of the need for communication that drives ELLs to learn the language. At the beginning stages of language acquisition there is a need to learn practical things and communicate for daily survival. This is not the time for teachers to track grammar rules but to help their students learn the day-to-day English that will help them negotiate the culture of the second school and the community. Alice felt that it was her role as the classroom teacher to do this for her students.

Nancy cited communication with parents as an important way to open up language and as she called it, “it goes both ways.” Using that little Spanish she knew, she attempted to talk to the parents of her students in their native language. Trying to open up communication with parents helped her realize she could get through to them even in a halting way. Building the deeper connections started with language.

Kate believed that adult ELLs, credited their motivation to learn English to their children. They wanted to learn the language to survive but they also wanted to learn English so that they could help them in school. There were many negative ramifications, she felt, for parents who did not learn English along with their children.

***Perception #4 Language factors that inhibit: Language becomes a barrier.*** One of the dominant themes in the participants’ comments was the perception that there were barriers to learning English. One barrier was the use of their native language rather than requiring them to use English only in the classroom. Native language use could keep them from needing to use English. One participant explained that by using the right kind

of teaching techniques they would keep native language use from becoming a crutch while encouraging the use of English.

I believe they should be included in the classroom and if quality, hands-on, real-life teaching is going on then ELLs will have no problem learning right along with the rest of the class. I do however think that allowing English-speaking in the classroom will help them learn more quickly. There are other ways to communicate so they don't have to speak their native language and can learn English words quickly if they let them speak their language all the time, then they will rely on it.

Jack, who had the least amount of experience with ELLs, repeatedly mentioned the "language barriers that kept him from getting to know his ELL student personally." He described his ELL student as "stuck". He could get to know her only a little bit he said because her lack of language kept her from deeper relationships with other English speakers. He also reported the pressure she felt to find a way to cross the language barrier. When she brought a language translator device to class, she was reluctant to get permission to use it. Jack felt he opened the door for her by encouraging her to use it anytime she needed it to bridge the language gap. If typing a word into the translator gave her what she needed to unlock the language barrier, he was more than happy to encourage the use of the device.

Kate believed that lack of English language created added pressure for ELLs. She perceived that others may exploit ELLs who do not know and use English. She noted that adult ELLs can sometimes be taken advantage of because of their lack of language

skills and they themselves feared unfair treatment as a result. Kate felt this treatment was undeserved but it pushed her ELLs to learn the language to keep from being taken advantage of by native speakers who sensed they did not understand fully.

***Perception #5 Language factors that inhibit: Silent period.*** Another barrier to language was the perception that ELLs will not speak the language during the early stages of language acquisition. Nancy identified a student in her classroom as in a very deep silent period. The student was unlocking the barrier first in the listening and comprehending receptive stage but had not crossed the barrier into communicating orally. She preferred to remain silent in class, reluctant to speak out.

***Perception #6 Language factors that inhibit: Lack of vocabulary.*** Jack suggested that what kept ELLs from academic language proficiency was their lack of understanding of the wording of classroom instructions and activities done in class. Vocabulary deficits slowed down English language use. Specific vocabulary needed to be taught so that the ELL students could expand language knowledge and use.

## **Summary**

In chapter four, I reported the quantitative and qualitative data analyses for research questions 1 to 4. The quantitative result of descriptive statistics and the Cronbach's Alpha test were generated with SPSS. I processed the transcribed interviews with the qualitative results using a modified Van Kaam method of categorization and coding analysis (Moustakas, 1994). In the following chapter, I will discuss the findings of the study. Both quantitative and qualitative findings will further be integrated and complemented in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

The purpose of the study was to explore preservice candidates' attitudes and beliefs about ELL inclusion in the regular classroom, their perceptions toward their training and support, and their perceptions toward instructional modifications regarding English language learners. This section discusses the findings based upon the quantitative and qualitative data observed from the study and how the research fulfills the predetermined purpose. In this chapter, I review the factors of candidates' perceptions that emerged in the study and note implications, limitations, and future directions.

#### **Preservice Teachers' Perceived Relationships to ELLs in the Mainstream Classroom**

Overall, survey results indicated that preservice teachers viewed their relationship with ELLs in the mainstream classroom positively. Reeves (2006) previously identified six components of regular classroom teachers' attitudes toward ELLs who were placed in their mainstream classrooms: (a) language, (b) time, (c) modification, (d) educational environment, (e) training and support, and (f) general attitudes. When examining each component separately, details emerged in this study as to the key essentials of positively supporting ELL inclusion. The preservice teachers in the present study were motivated to work with ELLs but did not feel adequately prepared or supported by ELL support staff nor did they know how to effectively access ELL supports. Surprisingly, even with specific ELL training in their teacher preparation program, they still felt unsure of having the necessary tools or the best way to implement the tools when it came to the "real" classroom. Obviously, the assumed transfer of understanding did not occur in these participants. While they knew that ELLs would require extra time and resources, they expressed the fear that they would not be able to provide these for their ELLs.

In this chapter, the research questions are discussed according to preservice teachers' attitudes toward ELLs, their perceptions toward instructional modifications for ELLs, and their perceptions toward the training and support they received to teach. I begin with the overall summary of the findings, the discussion of the quantitative findings intermixed with the qualitative findings supported by literature. With the benefit of this triangulation of data, research questions 1 and 4 are discussed together followed by research question 2 and finally research question 3.

Table 4  
*Topics of Discussion*

Topics	Research Questions	Components
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attitudes toward ELLs in the mainstream classroom</li> </ul>	1, 4	Educational Environment General Attitudes Language
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perceptions toward instructional instructional strategies for ELLs</li> </ul>	2	Modifications Time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perceptions toward training and support for ELLs</li> </ul>	3	Training and Support

Table 5

*Results: General Attitude and Education Environment*

Quantitative Findings	Qualitative Findings
1. Inclusion benefits all students	1. ELL inclusion improves overall Educational environment
2. English Acquisition takes longer than two years	2. Teacher's responsibility -Commitment, effort, duty -Collaboration
3. Best placement for ELLs is the mainstream classroom	

Table 6

*Results: Language*

Quantitative Findings	Qualitative Findings
1. English should be official language of the U.S.	1. Native language use facilitates content understanding
2. English acquisition takes longer than two years	2. Mainstream classroom is an important language learning environment
3. Native language should be supported in the mainstream classroom	3. Dual use of English and native language is beneficial

### **Preservice Teacher Attitudes toward English Language Learners**

I was interested in determining preservice teachers' attitudes toward English language learners by first examining their general attitudes, their view of the educational environment, and language issues. When the educational environment was examined, preservice teachers viewed ELL inclusion positively, seeing clear benefits for all

members of the classroom: the ELL student, other students, and the teacher. Overall, preservice teachers welcomed immediate ELL entrance to the mainstream classroom, believing that ELLs should not have to reach a minimum English proficiency level prior to placement. The participants agreed acquiring English is a lengthy process requiring more than two years and therefore the setting for learning English is important. This belief aligns with research done by Cummins (1986) on the time it takes to acquire a second language. He hypothesized that academic language (CALP) requires students to understand and discuss context-embedded content and may take as long as 7 years to acquire. Day-to-day social language (BICS), which is much less context-embedded, may take as little as 6 months to 2 years to acquire. Therefore, ELL placement in the mainstream classroom allows students time to learn content as they continue to acquire English and would not impede the growth of knowledge in either area. An interview participant explained the benefit of mainstream ELL placement this way, “I believe they should be included in the classroom and if quality hands-on real-life teaching is going on then ELLs will have no problem learning right along with the rest of the class.”

When surveying the perceptions about language separately, preservice teachers placed a dual value on making English the official language of the U.S. while still promoting native language use as a means of providing extra instructional support. There is a large body of research to support this finding for the mainstream classroom. The mainstream classroom can provide a language rich environment where ELLs can learn English. In his research on ELLs learning English, Tharp (1991) demonstrated the mainstream classroom offered plentiful opportunities to practice English language use around valuable educational topics. ELLs could learn English with native language

support as they progress through the acquisition phase. The survey also showed that preservice teachers perceived English acquisition to be an extended process, indicating ELLs were “better served” in the mainstream classroom where more exposure to English language experiences can occur within the context of academic learning. The following sections give further details that support these survey and interview data.

**ELL placement and inclusion.** The first category of discussion as it relates to preservice teachers’ attitudes toward ELLs has to do with the environment of the mainstream classroom and how placement issues impact ELLs’ ability to learn.

*Mixing ELLs and native language speakers.* When examining preservice teachers’ attitudes toward ELL inclusion, participants viewed the mixing of ELLs and native English speakers as having a positive impact on the classroom as a whole. A significant body of research indicates mainstream classrooms are perhaps the most important language learning environment and can be the training ground for the future success of ELLs (Adger, Snow, & Christian, 2002; Fillmore & Snow, 2000; Harklau, 1994; Williams, 2003; Stickney, 2003). Not only would the needs of the ELLs be more effectively met, placement in the mainstream classroom would improve the overall educational atmosphere for the rest of the students. In qualitative discussions of the survey, participants supported this idea of the mainstream classroom as a natural setting for ELL students. When ELLs were able to interact with English-speaking peers, English language learning was enriched as ELLs gained more opportunities for meaningful interactions. A reciprocal benefit came when other students were exposed to a new language. An interview participant explained “having ELL students benefits both types of students by each learning another language”. English speakers benefited from



exposure to another language and another culture while ELLs benefited from learning content in an English-rich environment.

Reeves (2006) conducted a similar study on mainstream subject area teachers' attitudes and perceptions of the inclusion of ELLs in their classrooms and discovered different results. She found that subject area teachers viewed ELL inclusion positively but did not support the idea that inclusion benefited all students. The only real benefit her participants cited was the other students' exposure to cultural diversity represented by the ELL students' backgrounds. A possible explanation for the difference between the views of preservice and subject area teachers could come from teacher preparation programs. Preservice teachers felt prepared by their teacher preparation programs while subject area teachers in Reeves' study stated they did not feel prepared to work with ELLs. Karabenick and Noda's (2004) support the idea that adequately prepared teachers are more likely to believe they are capable of providing quality instruction for ELL students. After surveying seventy-eight teachers, they found that teachers who felt empowered with instructional strategies and in-class resources had more positive attitudes toward ELLs in the classroom.

All of the interview participants spoke about the need for concurrent use of languages in the mainstream classroom. They believed it was their responsibility to use English as the language of instruction, but also to promote the use of an ELL's native language as a means of facilitating content understanding. The use of both languages allowed for the full participation of ELLs, in English acquisition as well as academic content learning. ELL academic success occurs best when they are provided appropriate instruction tailored to meet their specific needs in basic skills and in academic content

(Garcia, 1991). Waxman, Tharp, and Hilberg (2004) identified five standards for pedagogy critical to the academic success of ELLs in the mainstream classroom: (a) joint productive activities, (b) language and literacy development, (c) meaning making, (d) complex thinking, (e) instructional conversation. They found that teachers who continuously support interaction and activity in an ongoing interactive setting of language use lead ELLs to academic success. Contextualizing language learning in meaningful contexts within the regular classroom can support both English acquisition as well as supporting continued academic content growth (Tharp, Estrada, Dalton, & Yamauchi, 2000).

*Preservice teacher attitudes toward ELLs' native language use.* Preservice teachers talked about attitudes toward native language use and the resulting cultural understanding pointing out a connection between the two views. There is a body of research (Brophy & Good, 1986; Garcia-Nevarez, Stafford, & Arias (2005); Ladson-Billings, 1995) indicating a teacher's attitude toward other languages can send messages to students about what is valued and not valued in school. Garcia-Nevarez, et. al. (2005) conducted a study with one hundred fifty-two elementary teachers in regular classrooms and bilingual classrooms and surveyed attitudinal differences toward native language use. They found allowing the use of the student's native language in the classroom elevated an ELL's self-esteem and played a vital role in the process of student learning. Teachers with bilingual experience and training were more supportive of the role of native language to facilitate instruction. These researchers found the teachers' educational training and experiences with ELLs impacted their personal beliefs about ELLs. These personal beliefs then guided the instructional and pedagogical choices the teacher made

in the classroom.

Preservice teachers in this study seemed to agree with the research findings seeing the ELLs' native language use in the classroom as a way to promote mutual understanding. Interview participants connected the teacher's use of an ELL student's native language to "opening the door relationally for them." They thought ELLs were excited when they heard the teacher use the native language of the students. Participants described it as "getting at their level" and "even having a little language makes a connection", allowing the teacher to "open up language barriers." Participants expressed the belief that teachers should allow students to use their home language, and even go further, intentionally using the students' language to break through barriers and unlock doors that would promote the relational aspect of their interaction with ELLs.

Another aspect of ELL placement impacting inclusion was the atmosphere that was created when ELLs were placed in the regular classroom setting. One participant described the atmosphere as an "environment of compassion" which aided the sensitivity of all students towards each other. Another participant explained, "the more she (ELL student) felt like you were going to be the person to help her, the more she trusted you." Further, another participant talked about the connections made between teacher and the ELL student explaining, "even having a little of language makes a connection and allows me to get on their level and they would get on mine". Dawson, McCulloch, and Peyronel (1996) connected ELLs' perceptions of success or lack of success in language learning to what they called the "friendliness" of the learning atmosphere. When one hundred and twenty ELL students were surveyed and interviewed, the researchers found ELLs repeatedly attributed their academic success to the friendliness of the classroom setting

created by the teacher. The ELL students credited these positive feelings to the teacher's use of collaboration techniques and reduced competitiveness. Dawson, et.al. (1996) concluded that well-motivated students value the affective side of the classroom and attribute these characteristics to improved achievement levels.

Teachers need to be aware of factors that can inhibit language acquisition and use in the classroom as well. Clinging to native language use, feeling "stuck" in language progression, and the cultural pressures to use or not use English can keep ELLs from learning the language of classroom learning. Interview participants identified other language barriers consisting of the initial silent period typified in language learning and the lack of key content vocabulary.

**The teacher's responsibility.** Preservice teachers shared concerns that ELLs would require extra commitment, but they did not seem to feel it would an impossible task for them to meet ELL needs in the mainstream classroom. While ELLs may require more time, preservice teachers did not see this as a drawback to ELL inclusion nor did they feel it would take away teacher time with other students. They stated it was their responsibility, as the teacher, to meet the needs of *all* students in their classrooms and to balance their time with each group. Preservice teachers seemed confident in their roles as teachers and felt they could handle the extra load. In contrast, Reeves (2006) found that experienced teachers were less likely to want to take on the responsibility of ELL teaching in their mainstream classrooms. Garcia-Nevarez, et, al., (2005) also found that traditional teachers, in general, were against the extra work it would require of them to incorporate ELL-specific strategies. This attitude difference between subject area teachers and preservice teachers may be due to new teacher idealism by the preservice

teachers about their future classrooms or perhaps a perception that they have newly acquired tools from their teacher training programs giving them the confidence to work with ELLs.

While preservice teachers felt that this inclusion of ELLs was not without an additional commitment by teachers, they felt it was primarily the classroom teacher's duty to spend extra time and effort to meet ELL students' needs. They compared this time commitment to other students in their classrooms who had learning challenges and required more assistance and content accommodation from the teacher. One participant explained that "ELLs seemed to have additional learning challenges which complicated their educational process" and required extra instructional time in the classroom. While ELLs seek additional help, preservice teachers felt that ELLs also give out extraordinary effort and were usually able to stay on track with the rest of the class.

Another part of a teacher's responsibility was to demonstrate belief that ELLs are capable of learning and achieving in an English-based learning environment. Preservice teachers perceived the need to build student self-efficacy by encouraging and supporting ELLs' belief in themselves as good students. Research confirms the teacher plays a key role in influencing the ELL student's self-efficacy achievement can be raised through the teacher's pedagogical choices (Bandura, 1989, 2001; Bong, 1999; House, 1999; Huang & Chang, 2002; Pajares, 2003). These attitudes and behaviors link to the creation of a sense of community in the classroom and can improve ELL achievement. In his research, Garcia (1991) established a connection between teacher expectations of their ELL students and resulting ELL behaviors. He interviewed teachers, principals, and parents from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and found that classroom teachers who

were highly committed to the educational process of their ELL students perceived themselves as instructional innovators and used instruction and curriculum to promote the educational success of their students. Connecting the teacher's expectation to instructional choices strengthens the ELL student's self-efficacy can improve their performance in the classroom.

Not only was it the teacher's responsibility to work with ELLs, preservice teachers thought they should pursue other ways to help ELLs learn. In interviews, preservice teachers expressed in order to increase their connectivity with ELLs, they needed to "do whatever it takes", "work harder", and "stretch themselves" to enhance their teaching repertoire. A participant described it as "demonstrating teachability by being open to new ideas." Preservice teachers also indicated a need for the teacher to create a positive learning environment for ELLs in their classrooms. Again, participants used the term "openness" to indicate that teachers need to seek out their ELLs and get to know them, their families, and their cultures. They felt this would create an atmosphere of trust that would promote feelings of connectivity between the teacher and the ELL student.

Another part of the teacher's responsibility involved seeking out other professionals who could help support ELLs in the classroom setting. Preservice teachers expressed a need to cultivate collaboration skills with other teachers who had more experience and expertise with ELLs. They felt that this required them to go outside their classrooms and to seek help from experts in the building or other teachers with more experience with ELLs. They felt that inviting help from other experts would break down the barriers of the domain of their own classroom and would not only benefit their

students, but expand the teacher's skills as well. Participants referred to this as a co-teaching relationship between the content teacher and the ELL teacher to help balance the workload for the teacher. As one participant said, "This is the most efficient model in the long term. Keeping ELLs in the mainstream classroom with support helps them develop compensation skills and maintains the retention of those skills while promoting growth in needed areas."

**English language proficiency.** The English proficiency level also impacted preservice teacher attitudes toward ELLs. Preservice teachers did not think that ELLs should be required to attain a minimum level of English proficiency before they are placed in mainstream classroom for content learning. ELLs should be immediately included in mainstream classrooms. This would mean that that language proficiency was also a part of what the content area teacher should be responsible for as well as content.

Preservice teachers did not indicate that English should be used to the inclusion of the students' native language. They acknowledged that English should be the official language of the United States giving it a priority in the classroom, but they see the importance of using native languages to support learning for an ELL's transition into the mainstream classroom. It is important enough to the process that participants felt teachers should make an effort to provide classroom materials in native languages. There is increasing research about the value of multilingualism and "mother tongue" education has been advanced as a progressive concept in the education of ELLs (Keil, 2008). Adger, Snow, & Christian (2002) examined what teachers need to know about language and found that negative attitudes toward ELLs' native language may produce teacher behaviors that lead to negative attitudes toward the students themselves, which in turn

can impact achievement levels. The researchers found that teachers who are more confident about ELLs' performance anticipate success and may consequently feel more positive about their own ability to instruct them. In contrast, teachers with negative attitudes toward ELLs' native language may anticipate failure and may experience negative consequences.

### **ELL Achievement in Mainstream Classrooms**

This section discusses research question 2 focusing on preservice teachers' attitudes toward ELL achievement and implications for teachers. I will first discuss survey results pertaining to the classroom modifications and the amount of time dedicated to this. I will then discuss the qualitative data support for challenges that new teachers in classroom face, their efficacy beliefs about intervening with ELLs, and what they believe raises ELL achievement in the content area classroom.

Table 7  
*Results: Modification and Time*

Quantitative Findings	Qualitative Findings
1. Willingness to modify coursework	1. Equitable but not equally delivered
2. Reducing length of assignments - ambivalent	2. Collaboration is necessary
3. Consider student effort – but ELLs should be treated like other students	3. Believed teachers play an important role
4. Extra time should be given	4. Seek commonality
5. Use of native language should be allowed sometimes	5. Choose strategies that reflect care and respect for ELLs
6. Inclusion – welcomed	



7. Teachers have enough time but it requires extra commitment
- 

The survey results showed that when examining preservice teachers' ideas about modification strategies for ELLs, a majority of preservice teachers were willing to consider multiple ways of modifying coursework in a variety of ways. Reducing the length of the assignment, giving more time for the assignment, and allowing the use of ELLs' native language all were suggested by candidates as ways to facilitate instruction. In addition, preservice teachers expressed skepticism about incorporating ELL effort as a part of a grade.

There is a great deal of research that addresses teacher perception about the belief they have in their own abilities and whether or not they have the necessary tools to impact student learning. Teacher efficacy and teacher belief in their ability can promote learning and impact student achievement (Bandura, 1977, 2001; Pajares, 2003; Brophy & Good, 1986). According to Kagan (1992), teacher belief or the assumptions teachers make about students, learning, classrooms and subject matter, translates into the instructional choices a teacher makes. More specifically, research shows that the teacher's confidence about instructional capabilities appears to be instrumental in determining attitudes about ELLs, as well as behavior toward ELLs (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Zimbardo & Lieppe, 1991). If a teacher feels inadequate to meet student needs, it may produce teacher behavior that can lead to negative attitudes toward the students themselves. A teacher's negative attitude, in turn, can influence student achievement (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Diaz-Rico, 2000; Cummins, 2000). Consequently, preservice teacher's self-belief is an area of great importance within the education of ELLs.

Survey results seem to reflect these findings. Preservice teachers believed they played an important role in the educational success of ELLs and were ready to implement a variety of modification strategies to facilitate learning. The survey results indicated that preservice teachers believed that all instruction will not be equally delivered, but all students will be given an equitable opportunity to access learning. Instead of making excuses and blaming bureaucracies, parents, and communities, preservice teachers showed confidence that they had a variety of means available to them to make sure that ELLs have the ability to learn content even given a language barrier.

**Reducing the amount of coursework.** Overall, preservice survey participants believed in reducing the amount of coursework for ELLs but were ambivalent about whether or not it was a good practice. In addition, this was a practice they rarely observed other teachers employing which may add to their reticence to use it as a modification strategy. Perhaps, in principle, they agree that modifications are necessary but they may not know exactly how to navigate the balance of modification and reduction in assignment length.

**Effort as a part of the grade.** Preservice teachers indicated that if ELLs showed effort in their assignments, it should become part of the grade assigned to them. They did not believe ELLs should be failed if they put forth substantial effort on an assignment. Candidates specified that they did observe this practice in their clinical experiences at least some of the time and seemed very comfortable with implementing it in their future classrooms.

**Increasing the amount of time given for an assignment.** A majority of the preservice teachers believed time flexibility on course assignments was well suited to

ELL modification. This instructional choice was a modification that most preservice teachers had previously observed and one that was widely found in their field experience classrooms.

**The use of ELLs' native language in the mainstream classroom.** In spite of the fact that preservice teachers agreed that using a student's native language benefited ELL instruction in the mainstream classroom, they did not experience this happening in the classrooms they observed. They indicated that the training they received in teacher preparation coursework supported bilingualism and instructional contributions promoting dual language use in the classroom. They experienced the opposite practice in their observations in field experiences. Instead of classrooms that augment bilingualism, preservice teachers observed a monolingual environment where English-only seemed to be the norm. The drawback in preservice teachers experiencing something different in their field experiences is that they obtain many of their ideas from these experiences and from the practice of the teachers they are observing (Kagan, 1992). This duplicity in their knowledge base can be confusing, but the preservice teachers in this study said they chose to support dual language use in the classroom as advantageous to ELLs.

**Inclusion of ELLs in the mainstream classroom.** Preservice teachers reiterated they would have enough time to manage the increased workload that inclusion of ELLs may bring, seeing inclusion as an effective adaptation strategy. They acknowledged that it would require more of them as teachers, but they did not seem to think this demand was over and above what was expected of them as teachers. They believed they had the necessary skills to balance the time given to each student and prevent it from slowing the progress of any other student.

**Boosting ELL Achievement**

In further discussion through the interviews, preservice teachers noted other ways to meet ELL learning needs. They perceived they had the necessary resources to instruct ELLs and viewed instructional accommodations in a positive way. Conversely, Reeves (2006), found when in-service teachers felt they lacked experience in working with ELLs, it fueled their feelings of inadequacy and could even lead to resentment. Karabenick and Noda (2004) surveyed 729 teachers about their attitudes toward ELLs and separated them into two groups: 1) additive teachers and 2) subtractive teachers. Additive teachers saw culture and language as beneficial and believed students did not need to sacrifice their social and cultural identities. Subtractive teachers saw language as severely limiting to the student's progress and viewed multilingualism as undermining learning. Karabenick and Noda hypothesized teachers with positive views about language and culture were more capable of providing quality instruction for ELL students.

**Collaboration.** The qualitative analysis illuminated how aspects of modification boosted the progress of ELL achievement in the classroom. Preservice teachers affirmed that the best place for ELLs is in the mainstream classroom but maintained the importance of collaboration between the ELL teacher and the mainstream classroom. During interviews, teachers indicated they felt ELL achievement was enhanced when content teachers sought out other professionals in and out of the classroom. Collaboration facilitated teachers' willingness and ability to learn new ways to support ELLs in the mainstream classroom.

Preservice teachers described a co-teaching relationship between the content teacher and the ELL teacher that worked to balance the workload for the teacher. As one

participant said, “This is the most efficient model in the long term. Keeping ELLs in the mainstream classroom with support helps them develop compensation skills and supports the retention of those skills while promoting growth in needed areas.” They also expanded on the idea of collaboration to include with parents. Participants felt that making parents partners in their children’s learning augmented student achievement. As a result, they felt it was the teacher’s responsibility to make the classroom accessible to both parents and students. When teachers actively examine the needs of ELL students, seek out other ELL professionals in the building, and learn to reach out to parents as funds of knowledge, they are building skills that increase teacher efficacy and positively affect student efficacy (Warren, 2002).

**Pedagogical choices.** There is a growing body of research that addresses one of the most pressing issues in the education of ELLs, the need for culturally responsive teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Short, 1993; Gay, 2010; Banks, 2001; Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries, 2001). Benard (2003) identifies the teacher as the key to successfully educating students who are culturally and linguistically diverse, calling these teachers “turnaround teachers”. His research indicates that the specific practices and beliefs of these teachers can motivate and engage ELLs. Haberman (1995) calls these teachers “star teachers” and identified key characteristics of effective teachers. He found that star teachers accept the responsibility to engage all their students in learning activities. They persist to find what works best to promote and ensure academic success for all learners.

Interview participants in this study felt it was the teacher’s job to adapt learning for all students in their classrooms, including ELLs. The extra time and support invested by the teacher could better serve all students and make the classroom a richer place for

learning. It would mean that the teacher had to work harder, but candidates described it as a “stretching” time and “the point of being a teacher.”

Survey participants discussed the extra time commitment ELLs required from the teacher. One participant attributed the added time commitment to “ELLs who seemed to have additional learning challenges which complicated their educational process.” These students required additional assistance and needed their work simplified or minimized. ELLs also required extra instruction outside of the classroom. Participants indicated that while ELLs require additional help, their extraordinary effort usually keeps them on track with the rest of the class. Participants felt it was the teacher’s responsibility to determine when ELLs may need extra attention and to provide the necessary help or seek out other professionals within the school who could help.

Finally, participants identified other teacher characteristics that fostered success for ELLs, qualities that teachers needed to develop to encourage ELL progress in their classrooms. Teachers need to persist; they do not give up on their students but persist to find what works best. Teachers need to be sensitive and empathetic in a way that shows they appreciate the ways children and their families perceive their world. Teachers have the responsibility to reach out to their ELL students and establish connections.

**Seeking commonalities.** Interview participants described the importance of opening doors with their ELL students calling it “seeking commonalities.” They believed teachers needed to be “open” and seek ways to make connections with ELLs. They indicated that seeking common ground included enhanced communication and searching out language opportunities. It would require them to make personal connections for the ELLs to the curriculum, and to find more resources to augment learning. Teachers need

to make classrooms comfortable and safe for ELLs so that they would choose to learn English. Research (Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2010; Howard, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2002; Paley, 2002) indicates that classroom atmosphere does have an impact on how well ELLs learn. Delpit (1995) identified the need for a caring environment for ELLs in schools. Paley (2002) stated, “whatever else is going on in these kids’ lives we cannot control or change it. But when they cross our threshold this is a safe harbor (p. 126).” Teachers should aim at developing the ability to form authentic and effective relationships that build trust, care, and respect (Howard, 2006). Participants indicated that there were other strategies that added to a comfortable classroom environment including: (a) hands-on learning, (b) expanded literacy, (c) real-life connections, (d) scaffolding techniques, (e) cooperative learning, (f) alternative curriculum choices, and (g) strategic use of native language in the classroom. They identified each of these elements as the means to improve ELLs’ learning capacity.

**Detriments to ELL achievement.** During interviews, preservice teachers named inhibiting factors to ELL achievement as well. If teachers are not willing to take the time and extra effort to adapt curriculum for ELLs or explore the need for added resources, ELL progress in the classroom may be hindered. Teachers needed to be willing to invest the extra time it would require to meet the unique needs of ELLs. They also felt a lack of cultural knowledge about the ELL’s family and neighborhood, a lack of ELL background knowledge, and inappropriate teaching methods could detract from ELL learning. Preservice teachers felt they needed to be adequately prepared or knowledgeable enough in these areas to impact ELL achievement.

### **Training and Support to Effectively Address Diversity in the Classroom**

This section discusses research question three which focuses on preservice teachers' training and preparation to work with ELLs.

**Perceptions of training.** Overall, preservice teachers in general felt prepared to work with ELLs but would like more specific training in ELL techniques.

Table 8

*Results: Training and Support*

Quantitative Findings	Qualitative Findings
1. PTs feel prepared – somewhat	1. More training needed
2. PTs feel supported – somewhat	2. Other school-related experiences
3. Interested in more training	3. Other cultural experiences
	4. Authentic training experiences

***I feel prepared to teach ELLs.*** In general, preservice teachers felt somewhat prepared to meet the academic needs of ELLs in the mainstream classroom even without ELL-specific training. They believed their education courses prepared them for classroom instruction of all students but further experience was necessary. This corresponded with previous assertions by preservice teachers that ELLs' primary placement should be in the mainstream classrooms and the feelings of responsibility preservice teachers hold to insure ELLs learn in that setting.

***I need more ELL training.*** Preservice teachers seem to be aware they are at the beginning stage of teaching and still need more training. They felt they had adequate experiences in their field experiences to prepare them to work with ELLs, but as they



move forward into teaching jobs they acknowledged they would need more training. This belief is different from what Reeves (2006) found in her study of subject area teachers. Subject area teachers did not feel prepared to meet the needs of ELLs in their classroom and were ambivalent about receiving more training. Subject area teachers in her study did not share the same sense of responsibility as preservice teachers that ELL placement should be in the mainstream classroom.

**Perceptions of support.** Preservice teachers acknowledged the importance of collaborating with ELL staff in the building to foster deeper, more positive interactions with their ELLs.

***Support during field experience.*** The survey participants felt their cooperating teacher and supervising teacher gave adequate support to them as they worked with ELLs. This may explain why they expressed confidence and readiness to work with ELLs. The structure provided in field experiences gave the preservice teacher experts to whom they can go to for advice. Conversely, when subject area teachers were asked about the support they felt from the administration, they disagreed that they had adequate support (Reeves, 2006). The difference may be due to the differing roles supervising and cooperating teachers serve with preservice teachers compared to the role of an administrator with subject area teachers. Cooperating and supervising teachers act as mentors and teachers to preservice teachers are in a position as teacher to student, to offer advice and direct input. Administrators lead instructional choices in the building but do not necessarily serve in a mentorship role with subject area teachers. Subject area teachers may also feel that asking for help may be perceived as showing ineffectiveness on their part as teachers, especially with the principal. Kagan (1992) described subject

area teachers as more isolated in their classrooms and viewing the classroom as the one place that is relatively safe and predictable. Subject area teachers hold a perception of the classroom as the one area they can control in a professional life that is increasingly beyond their control. This may also give some insight as to why they do not seek as much help from outside the classroom.

***Support from ELL professionals.*** Preservice teachers did not feel the same confidence in working with ELL professional staff. While they occasionally felt supported by ELL teachers, few of the preservice teachers directly conferenced with ELL teachers about ELL students in their practicum classrooms. Preservice teachers may feel they get indirect support from the ELL staff but direct collaboration is missing. Reeves (2006) found that subject area teachers also felt the disconnect with ELL professionals in the building. They had little contact and rarely conferenced with ELL professionals adding to their feelings of inadequacy of preparation. This may be due in part to the responsibility of the ELL staff to serve many different grade levels in a building and even more than one building making finding time to collaborate with classroom teachers much more difficult. If the cooperating teacher does not model collaboration with the ELL staff, this may impact how the preservice teachers view their role with the ELL teachers.

**What prepared preservice teachers.** Interview participants identified specific elements of their preparation that readied them for working with ELLs. Concurring with the findings of the survey, they expressed the need for more training in ELL-specific teacher preparation coursework. In addition, they cited other coursework which helped them prepare for working with ELLs including special education courses, specialized literacy methods, and language acquisition coursework. There is a significant body of

research (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Harklau, 1994; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Zeicher, 2003) that advocates the need for reforming teacher preparation to better prepare teachers to use culturally relevant pedagogy to meet ELL needs in the classroom. Villegas and Lucas (2002) found in their study of graduate students preparing to become teachers, a need to infuse teacher preparation coursework with issues of diversity in individual ELL preparation courses as well as more broadly throughout the entire curriculum. They found that diversity issues needed to be central in the preparation of all teachers rather than peripheral. No approach to curriculum and instruction can close the achievement gap without corresponding changes in teacher education (Zeicher, 2003). Training teachers in culturally responsive instruction can build bridges between the culture of the school and the culture of the home.

Preservice teachers in this study identified other school-related experiences with ELLs helped prepare them for working with ELLs. Field experiences, teaching in after-school programs, international travel and study programs added to their sense of readiness to work with the ELL population. These experiences were equally important in their training as they gave valuable first hand experience with ELLs in a variety of settings. Class work formed the framework for their preparation and any other experiences with ELLs filled in the gaps.

Beyond formal teacher preparation coursework, interview participants mentioned a variety of experiences that were of benefit to their ELL classroom experiences. The more experience preservice teachers had with ELLs in other settings before they entered the classroom, the better off they felt once they began teaching. They referenced experiences such as parish programs, adult ELL literacy classes, and experiences in or

with other cultures. Interview participants considered experiences that helped them immerse in a culture gave them a sense that “they had done this before” and that gave them an added sense of preparedness when they entered the classroom. Participants agreed that participating in experiences outside the classroom requires extra work, but they felt that is “the point of being a teacher.”

Preservice teachers discussed more authentic training experiences which they felt more effectively prepared them to work with ELLs. They mentioned the power of study-abroad programs that gave them experiences in another culture not only learning how to teach English to non-English speakers, but also to provide teachers with experiences in foreign cultures similar to what their students experienced when they came to America. Authentic teacher preparation experiences and venues such as service learning programs gave preservice teachers a “migrant’s view of the world” and therefore were more powerful learning practices for preservice teachers (Pappamihel, 2007). Washburn (2008) interviewed undergraduate preservice teachers following a specific course on language training with a concurrent field experience and found that experiencing a culture first hand developed more teacher empathy and encouraged a willingness to try various strategies to help ELLs in their classrooms.

When asked about the characteristics of a well-prepared ELL teacher, preservice teachers said they believed teachers needed to be resourceful, to show compassion, and display a great work ethic. One participant explained that they needed to be “prepared to work hard.” Collaboration skills were extremely important and attitudes that supported collaboration such as a willingness to seek out help. Participants described this as an approachable demeanor that invited others to work with them.

## **Implications**

**I can but I can't, I should but I shouldn't.** Preservice teachers are certain about ELL placement in their classrooms and do not seem to have mixed feelings about the beneficial impact of ELLs in the classroom. Where they do feel conflicted is in their ability to provide adequately for ELL students and still meet the needs of all their other students. Preservice teachers can meet these needs if: (a) native languages are supported, (b) there is collaboration with ELL professionals, (c) there is adequate professional training, and (d) they learn ELL-specific teaching strategies. Meeting the ELL needs will require extra effort on the teacher's part as well as from other ELL professional staff members and administrators.

**It's my responsibility.** Preservice teachers clearly take responsibility for providing an environment that supports and encourages content and language learning. Providing a trusting environment, creating a positive learning atmosphere, expecting the most of their students all play into their attitude of responsibility. Interview participants suggested teachers had the initial responsibility to initiate a call for help from other ELL professionals even though they did not see this practice occurring when they were in their field experience.

Preservice teachers seem to divide their examination of the topic of modifications for ELLs into two general categories: cognitive modifications and non-cognitive modifications. Cognitive modifications are knowledge acquisition changes made by the teacher that directly influence how ELLs interact with the content material in the classroom. Non-cognitive modifications are the indirect influences that provide an

atmosphere in the classroom that can enhance ELL learning but are not as readily identified as modifications.

**Cognitive modifications.** Preservice teachers speak about cognitive-influenced modifications such as reducing the amount of material in an assignment the student must complete, increasing the amount of time ELLs need to complete the assignment, and the use of their native language to negotiate new material. These are concrete changes teachers can manipulate and quantify based on perceived ELL needs. All of these changes are set in the context of an inclusion placement for ELLs in the regular classroom, another concrete example of how learning can be modified. In the quantitative data collection preservice teachers affirmed these cognitive factors and continued to affirm the same cognitive factors in the qualitative interviews. In the qualitative interviews, preservice teachers expanded on cognitive style modifications to include pedagogical strategies that are effective with ELLs, knowledge about students' personal and family backgrounds, and specific cultural awareness and understanding of their students.

**Non-cognitive modifications.** Preservice teachers identified modifications they made that were not directly related to the cognitive tasks in their classroom but were changes that they believed impacted ELLs just as much as the cognitive adaptations they made. They expressed an important area of concern relating to the atmosphere created by the teacher in the classroom. An inviting, warm, safe classroom was demonstrated through the teacher's caring attitude. Caring is a value that could be used to improve achievement through the enhancement of community. Caring goes beyond feeling and is difficult to define in actual practice. Preservice teachers described it as commitment and

responsibility to their students. They discussed the importance of caring in the classroom as it related to interactions with students and families, expectations of high performance, and the supportive and encouraging attitude that a teacher demonstrates toward students.

Teachers need to create a climate that provides continual support, an environment that is warm and inviting. Effective teachers organize and manage a positive learning environment that fosters high expectations where the teacher communicates a belief in their student's abilities. Building relationships with ELLs builds their self-confidence and can influence persistence in ELLs (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2002). None of these non-cognitive modifications are easily measured or taught but the impact they have on ELL achievement could be just as empowering and result and positive.

**Syncretistic perceptions.** Preservice teachers contend that ELLs should be included in regular classrooms to learn English and not separated in isolation, but feel just as strongly that they are not fully prepared to meet the needs of this population. This ambivalence comes out repeatedly in their discussions. They want ELLs in their classrooms, but ELLs require more time from them. ELLs should be a part of the content classroom, but teachers do not feel pedagogically prepared to teach them. ELLs will require more work from the teacher, but this will not detract from meeting the needs of other students. Even with these drawbacks to incorporating ELLs in their classrooms, preservice teachers do not seem willing to give up on them, but want to find ways to help. Mikulecky, et. al. (1995) says that teachers' attitudes toward tasks and their sense of their own abilities are related to the likelihood of persisting in the face of difficulty. A higher teacher self-efficacy is reflected in higher expectations for their students (Tasan, 2001).

There is a critical need for teacher preparation programs to help teachers acquire the knowledge and skills that will improve the caliber of instruction and consequently the success of students. The better prepared the teacher, the better the student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2004).

### **Future research**

In order to more fully understand preservice teachers' attitudes and perceptions, a survey of individual groups of preservice teachers is necessary. This study reported on all endorsement levels of preservice preparation. In order to dissect teacher preparation for ESL inclusion, future studies should be done at the individual endorsement levels of elementary, middle school, and secondary. A clearer picture of the differences in preparation would emerge and indicate whether or not there is an inequitable training based on endorsement levels.

Research on teacher belief has been conducted with preservice teachers and with subject area teachers. Future research should be done in a longitudinal study of how teacher belief evolves from the preservice years through the induction years to seasoned teachers. This design would provide valuable insight into how teachers' belief systems evolve and may help in the future design of teacher preparation programs to promote self-belief growth in preservice teachers and continuously through professional development of regular classroom teachers.

I would suggest that future research studies investigate specific areas in teacher preparation that might determine where the most effective teacher learning for ELLs can occur. Future studies should explore the use and impact of more authentic field experiences such as study-abroad cultural programs and how students can reproduce and



apply what they have learned to real-life problems. More closely connecting embedded real-life cultural experiences to teacher preparation coursework should strengthen culturally relevant pedagogical training.

A need exists to conduct studies on how teacher educators can develop habits of mind in preservice teachers to more effectively utilize reflective thinking skills to promote change and growth. Preservice teachers are required to spend large amounts of time observing classrooms throughout their preparation, but observation in and of itself will not result in change in belief or practice. Studies should be conducted in teacher preparation institutions on how to guide observation where preservice teachers are taught to use what they are seeing in field experiences, to think, apply it, and make it their own.

### **Limitations**

I recognize certain limitations to this study that could have a potential impact on the outcome from it. I would suggest that some limitations should guide future research options. The limited sample size significantly limits my ability to make broader generalizations from my results. A wider sample size would give results that would be applicable to the population of preservice teachers in general. Extended interviews with more candidates would give more data and increase the reliability of the study.

Future research on preservice teachers' belief systems about ELLs could be expanded to include other methods of data collection. This might include classroom observations to see how the preservice teacher actually interacts with ELL students in the field experience setting.

This study was a survey snap shot in time and did not give enough time to see the progression of preparation a preservice teacher may encounter. A longitudinal study that

follows preservice teachers throughout their teacher preparation coursework would give a clearer picture of the development of thought and belief systems toward ELL inclusion. Furthermore, a longer look at the development of preservice teachers would give specific information about the evolution of how a teacher is prepared to more effectively work with ELLs.

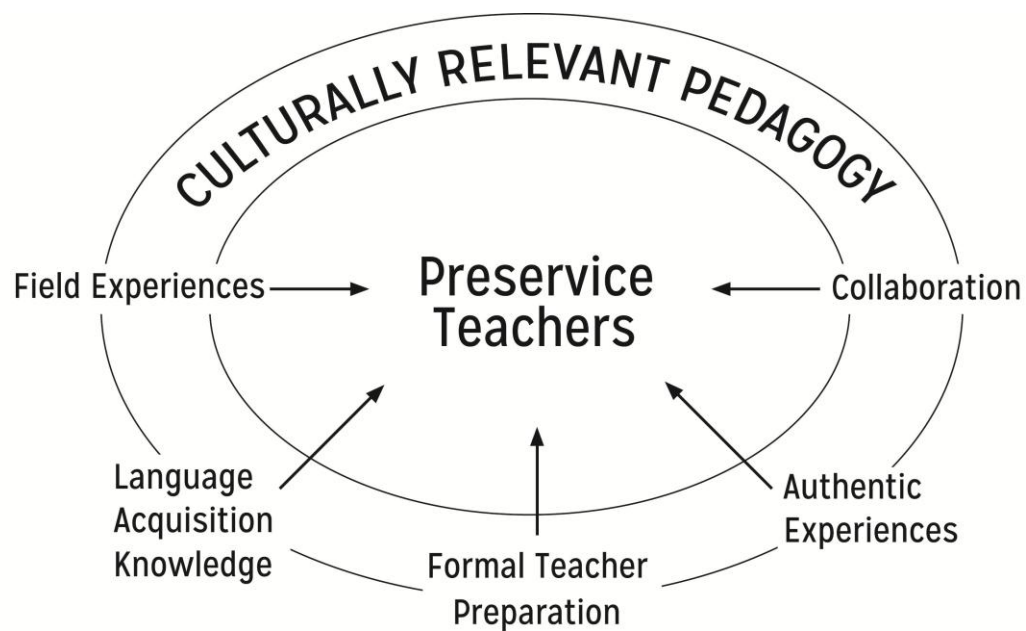
## **Conclusion**

### **An evolving nexus – all forces converge**

The results of this study support the findings of previous studies related to language and preservice teachers' attitudes toward ELLs. Preservice teacher preparation institutions must prepare candidates beyond philosophical belief that culture and linguistics play an important role in the academic achievement of ELLs and merely good intentions that they will make a difference once they get into their own classrooms. Teacher preparation must drive preservice teachers to take action to prevent academic inequities for ELLs. Active involvement in preservice settings that promote equity and excellence can move preservice teachers from simple awareness of cultural diversity to actions steps that will transform their teaching philosophy. Teacher preparation institutions need to search for ways to actively prepare preservice teachers throughout their programs using avenues that put them in authentic settings with ELLs, ELL parents and communities, and with other ELL professionals. Preservice teachers in this study cited key areas they believed impacted their training including: 1) realistic field experiences in a variety of settings, 2) exposure to second language acquisition in concrete situations, 3) cultural and linguistic principles embedded in formal preparation, 4) authentic experiences that put preservice teachers in situations where they experience

first-hand cultural and linguistic acquisition, and 5) opportunities in school settings to collaborate in real time with other teachers and ELL professionals. Experiential learning in authentic settings will give preservice teachers more understanding of ELL needs and the role of collaboration with other ELL professionals in the building.

Figure 2. *Culturally Relevant Pedagogical Factors in Preservice Teacher Preparation*



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*Appendix A: English Language Learners in Mainstream Classrooms – Revised*  
A Survey of Preservice Teachers

**Section A**

*Please read each statement and place a check in the box which best describes your opinion.*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. ELL students should not be included in general education classes until they attain a minimum level of English proficiency				
2. The modification of coursework for ELL students would be difficult to justify to other students.				
3. It is a good practice to simplify coursework for ELL students.				
4. Subject area teachers do not have enough time to deal with the needs of ELL students.				
5. I would welcome the inclusion of ELL students in my classroom.				
6. I feel prepared as a teacher to meet the academic needs of ELL students in the mainstream classroom.				
7. The inclusion of ELL students in subject area classes creates a positive educational atmosphere.				
8. It is a good practice to lesson the quantity of coursework for ELL students.				
9. I am interested in receiving more training in working with ELL students.				
10. The inclusion of ELL students in mainstream classroom settings creates a positive educational atmosphere.				
11. I would support legislation making English the official language of the U.S.				
12. I struggled when teaching ELL students in my field experience settings.				
13. Teachers should not modify assignments for the ELL students enrolled in the mainstream classroom setting.				
14. Teachers should not give ELL students a failing grade if the students display effort.				
15. I am not sure what to do to help ELL students learn in a mainstream classroom.				
16. ELL students should avoid using their native language while at school.				
17. ELL students should be able to acquire English within two years of enrolling in U.S. schools.				



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18. Have you ever had an ELL student enrolled in your practicum, field experience, and/or student teaching classroom placements?      Yes      No (if **no**, please skip to **Section C.**)

19. Approximately how many ELL students were enrolled in your school placements during the 2010-2011 school year? \_\_\_\_\_

### Section B

*Which, if any, of the following are descriptive of your school placement when ELL students are enrolled?*

*Please indicate the extent to which each of the following apply to your field experience classroom assignments.*

	Seldom or Never	Some of the time	Most or all of the time
<b>Classroom Practices</b>			
20. ELL students are allowed more time to complete their coursework.			
21. ELL students are given less coursework than other students.			
22. An ELL student is allowed to use her/his native language in the class.			
23. Materials for ELL students are provided in their native language.			
24. Effort is more important than achievement when grading ELL students.			
<b>Impact of Inclusion</b>			
25. The inclusion of ELL students in classes increases the teacher's workload.			
26. ELL students require more teacher time than other students require.			
27. The inclusion of ELL student in a class slows the progress of the entire class.			
<b>Teacher Support</b>			
28. I receive adequate support from cooperating teacher and supervising teacher when ELL students are enrolled in my classes.			
29. I receive adequate support for the ELL staff when ELL students are enrolled in my classes.			
30. I conference with the ELL teacher.			

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**Section C**

*Please answer the following question. Your answers will assist in the categorization of the responses.*

31. What is the grade level of your endorsement?

- ☐ Elementary Education ( K-6)  
☐ Middle School (Grades 4-9)  
☐ Secondary (Grades 7-12)  
☐ Elementary-Secondary (K-12)

32. If you are endorsed in Middle School or Secondary, what subject area(s) do you teach? (if more than one, please list your primary area first)

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33. What academic grade level are you in presently:

Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	Student Teaching Semester
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34. Please indicate your gender..... Male      Female

35. Is English your native language?..... YES      NO

36. Do you speak a second language? .....

37. *If yes, please estimate your highest ability level attained:*

☐ Beginner      ☐ Intermediate      ☐ Advanced

38. Have you taken specific coursework in teaching language minority/EL students?

39. *If yes, please describe the type of training, (i.e., in-service workshops, coursework)*

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40. Comments: Please write any additional comments you may have concerning the inclusion of ELL students in K-12 classrooms.

***Invitation for Telephone Interview:*** Please indicate if you would be willing to participate in a telephone interview to provide additional information concerning the inclusion of EL students in K-12 classrooms by clicking on the link below. Clicking on the link will maintain the anonymity of your answers on this survey and will allow you to provide contact information for a 20-30 minute telephone interview.

[URL Link to telephone survey](#)

Thank you for completing this survey.

### Appendix B: Guided Interview Questions

- What is your perception of your ability to connect with ELLs in the mainstream classroom?
- What do you perceive as facilitating/inhibiting factors in your ELL students' learning?
- Describe the attitudes and behaviors of a “connecting teacher”?
- What are the challenges of a new teacher in a classroom with students whose culture is not your own?
- What do you perceive prepared you to meet the needs of their ELL students?
- How do you express the possibility of your own efficacy in educating and intervening with their ELL students?
- What do you perceive will raise the achievement levels of ELLs in the content area classroom?

## Appendix C: Preservice Teacher Invitation for the Quantitative/Nested Qualitative Study

March, 2010

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ Preservice Teacher,

My name is Susan Alford, and I am a doctoral student in Education at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I have been given permission by the University of Nebraska and \_\_\_\_\_ University administration to conduct a research study at your school. I would like to ask for your permission.

With the recent increase in the number of students in the state of Nebraska whose first language is not English, preservice teachers in all subject areas are now working with ELL (English Language Learner) students. The purpose of my study is to examine the experiences of preservice teachers who are preparing to teach these students. I am seeking preservice teachers who are willing to share about their experiences with ELLs in their field experiences and/or student teaching experiences. The study will last from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_. In order to fully understand your experience with ELL students, I would like to include open-ended question that would give more specific examples of your experiences. Participation in this study will help reveal the needs of preservice teachers whose field experience classes enroll ELL students. I deeply appreciate your willingness to share your experience.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please click on the link below and proceed with the survey. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me for further information. I can be reached at [salford@graceu.edu](mailto:salford@graceu.edu) or (402) 449-2932.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Susan F. Alford  
Ph.D. Candidate  
Curriculum and Instruction, ELL Education

[Zoomerang Survey Link](#)

Appendix D: Letter of Invitation to Department Chair of Quantitative/Qualitative  
Study Site

\_\_\_\_\_ Higher Education Institution  
Omaha, NE 68108

Dear Department Chair,

My name is Susan Alford, and I am a doctoral student in Education at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I am interested in conducting a research study on the experiences of preservice teachers who have participated in a field experience or student teaching experiences with ELL students in their classes. \_\_\_\_\_ University, with its preservice placements in schools with a wide diversity of ELL students would be an ideal site for my study.

Preservice teachers who volunteer to participate in my study would be asked to complete an on-line quantitative survey with nested qualitative questions about their perceptions of their experiences with ELLs. The duration of the study from \_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_, 2010. Enclosed you will find a letter of invitation I would like to send to your preservice teachers whose field experiences include ELL students.

I believe my study has the potential to benefit preservice teachers in the Omaha area. With the dramatic rise in the number of students whose first language is other than English in Omaha and Lincoln, the goal of my study is to understand the challenges and benefits of inclusion of these students in mainstream classrooms.

I would like to ask your permission to locate my study at \_\_\_\_\_ University. I have already secured permission from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln department of research. I am currently the chair of the Education Department at Grace University and supervise field experience and student teaching experiences with ELL students. My office hours are 9-3PM, Monday to Thursday. Perhaps you would like to meet to discuss my study more thoroughly. I will contact your office by telephone this week.

I hope you will consider allowing me access to \_\_\_\_\_ preservice teachers. You can contact me at (402) 449-2032, or [salford@graceu.edu](mailto:salford@graceu.edu) or at the address below. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Susan F. Alford  
1311 S. 9<sup>th</sup> Street  
Omaha, NE 6

## Appendix E: Cover Letter to Survey

University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
College of Education  
231 Mabel Lee Hall  
Lincoln, NE 68588

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Preservice Teacher,

I would like to invite you to participate in the research study, *ELL Students in Mainstream Classrooms: A Survey of Teachers*. This dissertation study is designed to explore the experiences of preservice teachers whose field experience and student teaching experience classes enroll students who are English Language Learners (ELLs). Your input will provide valuable insight.

Whether you have no experience with ELL students or years of experience with ELL students, I would like to ask you to participate in this study by filling out the online survey. The survey is anonymous and individual and respondents will not be coded in any way. Survey results may be presented at professional conferences or published in professional journals. Completion of this survey indicates your consent to participate.

After completing the survey please click n the submission button. Please keep this letter for your records, and feel free to contact me with questions or comments at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, College of Education, 231 Mabel Lee Hall, Lincoln, NE 68588, Attention; Susan F. Alford, by telephone at (402)449-2932, or by email at [salford@unl.edu](mailto:salford@unl.edu)

Thank your for your participation.

Sincerely,

Susan F. Alford  
PhD Candidate  
Curriculum and Instruction, ELL Education

## Appendix F: Summary Tables of Survey Results: Frequencies

Table 1

*Summary of Survey Results for Section A*

Survey Item	Mean(S)	SD Freq (%)	D Freq (%)	A Freq (%)	SA Freq (%)
A1	2.24(.62)	3(7)	26(63)	11(27)	1(2)
A2	1.95(.72)	0(0)	1(2)	24(59)	16(39)
A3	2.37(.77)	4(10)	21(51)	13(32)	3(7)
A4	2.02(.72)	10(24)	20(49)	11(27)	0(0)
A5	3.37(.54)	0(0)	1(2)	24(59)	16(39)
A6	2.90(.74)	1(2)	10(24)	22(54)	8(20)
A7	3.27(.50)	0(0)	1(2)	28(68)	12(29)
A8	2.44(.71)	3(7)	19(46)	17(41)	2(5)
A9	3.22(.53)	0(0)	2(5)	28(68)	11(27)
A10	3.24(.48)	0(0)	1(2)	29(71)	11(27)
A11	3.07(.79)	1(2)	8(20)	19(46)	13(32)
A12	2.44(.55)	1(2)	21(51)	19(46)	0(0)
A13	1.93(.72)	11(27)	23(56)	6(15)	1(2)
A14	2.61(.59)	0(0)	18(44)	21(51)	2(5)
A15	2.20(.27)	5(15)	22(54)	12(29)	1(2)
A16	2.00(.63)	8(20)	25(61)	8(20)	2(5)
A17	2.89(.68)	2(5)	19(46)	18(44)	2(5)

*Note:* standard deviation; SD = strongly disagree; D = disagree; A = agree; SA = strongly agree



*Summary of Survey Results for Section B*

Survey Item	Mean(S)	Seldom or Never Freq (%)	Some of the Time Freq (%)	Most or All of the Time Freq (%)
B20	2.03(.68)	6(21)	16(55)	24(24)
B21	1.72(.72)	9(31)	19(66)	1(3)
B22	1.3(.65)	7(24)	17(59)	5(17)
B23	1.41(.57)	18(62)	10(34)	1(3)
B24	1.97(.50)	4(24)	22(76)	3(10)
B25	2.41(.57)	1(3)	15(52)	13(45)
B26	2.52(.51)	0(0)	14(48)	15(52)
B27	1.72(.65)	11(38)	15(52)	3(10)
B28	2.31(.71)	4(14)	12(41)	13(45)
B29	2.10(.72)	6(21)	14(48)	9(31)
B30	1.79(.82)	13(45)	9(31)	7(24)